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College directs new $4.9 million gift to mental health services

By KATIE FUTTERMAN
Managing Editor

Middlebury College will allocate $4.9 million in additional funding towards mental health services for students, thanks to an unrestricted gift from a member of the class of 1959.

The college plans to use the money to increase the number of licensed counselor positions, as well as stipend-supported graduate internship opportunities, in an effort to increase the diversity of perspectives in mental health services. It will also include guest and visiting counselors to facilitate workshops including identity-based work and outdoor programming.

"In recent years, higher education has experienced an acute need for increased support and diversified approaches for mental health, and it continues to be one of the highest priorities for Middlebury," the college wrote in an email to the community on Dec. 5.

An unrestricted gift allows the college to meet its own priorities, not those specific to a donor. Senior Leadership Group approached Barbara McCall, associate vice president for student health and well-being

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VERMONT SUPERIOR COURT DENIES COLLEGE'S MOTION TO DISMISS MEAD LAWSUIT

By TEJAS SRINIVASAN
Editor at Large

As "Chapel" hangs on the sign opposite Proctor dining hall, text off-kilter and clearly unfinished, the lawsuit surrounding Middlebury's "highest point" continues to unfold in the Addison County Superior Court.

The plaintiff's original complaint was that Middlebury did not have the right to remove the "Mead" name from the chapel, which was built after former Governor John A. Mead donated $75,000 in total to build it on behalf of his ancestors.

In March of this year, former Vermont Governor and Executive-in-Residence James Douglas filed a lawsuit against Middlebury College for removing the "Mead" name from the chapel, due to Mead's support of eugenic theory. Middlebury College filed a motion to dismiss on April 28, 2023, which was denied by the Addison County Superior Court on Aug. 4.

Middlebury's counsel Justin B. Barnard of law firm Dinse, Knapp & McAndrew argue that no such naming right existed, while Douglas argues instead that the circumstances of the financial contribution imply a perpetual naming right.

"Whether framed under contract or gift law, proof that a perpetual naming right was intended ultimately will have to satisfy an elevated standard of clarity to be enforceable," Judge Robert A. Mello wrote in his opinion.

Writing the decision from the Addison Unit of the Vermont

CHARLIE DEICHMAN-CASWELL / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Formerly known as "Mead Chapel," the name of Middlebury's chapel hangs in limbo as a lawsuit over naming rights moves through the Addison County Superior Court.

Superior Court Mello, reiterated that the central question of the lawsuit is whether John Mead's contribution in 1914 falls under contract or gift law, and if there was a perpetual naming right included at the time.

Jared Carter, professor of law at Vermont Law School, shared his perspective on the way Douglas' lawsuit has unfolded thus far. Carter emphasized that motions to dismiss are common in early stages of litigation in order to test the sufficiency of the plaintiff's claims.

"This was a decision, non-decision, in a lot of ways," Carter said. "Even though the plaintiffs were successful in keeping the case alive, I think the precedent that Judge Mello cited indicates that [the plaintiffs] have a heavy burden in order to keep moving forward."

Carter also mentioned that Middlebury did not pursue first amendment arguments in their motion to dismiss. Defendants in Vermont are allowed to challenge a lawsuit if they believe it infringes on their right to free speech, according to Vermont's laws on Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. Vermont has strong legal protections to prevent lawsuits that infringe on free speech without identifying actual harm done to the plaintiff, which is the Mead family in this case, according to the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

"There are perhaps important first amendment principles at stake when you talk about what you name a school; that's in large part how you speak to the world about who you are and your values," Carter said.

This decision by the Superior Court brings the case into discovery, a phase of litigation where any documents in the case are shared

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Middlebury community responds to shooting of three Palestinian students in Burlington

By JULIA PEPPER
Senior Local Editor

Tahseen Ali Ahmad and Kinnan Abdalhamid went to visit their close childhood friend Hisham Awartani's family in Burlington, Vt. over Thanksgiving break from college. All three men were shot while walking down the street on Nov. 25 while two of them were wearing keffiyehs, patterned scarves that symbolize Palestinian identity, and all three were speaking a mix of English and Arabic at the time they were shot, according to Seven Days. They all survived, but Artwani is currently paralyzed from the chest down.

The shooting has prompted response across Vermont and around the country as a potential hate crime.

"In this charged moment, no one can look at this incident and not suspect that it may have been a hate-motivated crime," Burlington Police Chief Jon Murad said in a

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Faculty Council votes to extend Credit/No Credit deadline through Dec. 8 in response to two student deaths this semester

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS
Editor in Chief

The Faculty Council passed a motion in an emergency meeting last Friday, Nov. 17 to extend the deadline to drop a course and invoke Credit/No Credit for the fall semester through Friday, Dec. 8.

Sixty-seven percent of the 96 faculty members who voted on the motion at the meeting voted in favor of extending the course drop & Credit/No Credit deadlines.

The motion upon which the Faculty Council voted read, "In light of recent tragedies, the Fall 2023 deadlines for dropping a course and opting for Credit/No Credit grading will be extended until 5 pm on December 8. Courses taken under CR/NCR for the fall 2023 semester can count for major/minor requirements, as well as distribution requirements."

The motion passed in an effort by faculty to provide greater flexibility for students impacted by the two student deaths on campus this semester. The Faculty Council passed a similar motion to extend the course drop and Credit/No Credit deadlines in November 2021, following the death of a student on campus and in the midst of a Covid-19 outbreak that caused students to be sent home early for winter break.

The Student Government Association (SGA) sent an email to all students after the emergency meeting announcing the passage of the motion. SGA President Abed Abbas '24 submitted a resolution to the college administration on behalf of the SGA on Sunday, Nov. 12 calling to extend the Credit/No Credit alternate grade mode option for the rest of the fall semester.

Abbas and Freddi Mitchell '25, student constituent advisor on the College Board of Advisors, were in attendance at the Faculty Council meeting to advocate in favor of the motion.

Abbas explained to the group that the death of Ivan Valerio '26, the second death of the semester following the death of Evelyn Mae Sorensen '25 in mid-September, happened five days after the deadline to drop a course and invoke Credit/No Credit ended on Nov. 3. As a result, Abbas said, students did not know about this circumstance in making their decision whether or not to invoke Credit/No Credit. It would not be fair for all of the hard work students have put in this semester to be devalued in the aftermath of this crisis during the final weeks of the semester, he added.

"This has been worse than any of the past semesters I've been here," Abbas said at the meeting. "Student morale is literally at rock bottom."

The original motion brought to the Faculty Council meeting did not extend the Credit/No Credit grade mode to count for major and minor requirements, or for distribution requirements. Phil Chodrow, assistant professor of Computer Science, called to amend the motion to include a provision that was a part of the SGA resolution that allowed courses taken Credit/No Credit to count toward major, minor and distribution requirements.

The extension of the course drop and Credit/No Credit deadlines in November 2021 allowed for courses taken Credit/No Credit to count toward major, minor and distribution requirements.

Chodrow explained that in his computer science courses, many of his students knew Valerio, who was a prospective computer science major. Without the amendment, Chodrow said, many of his students grieving from Valerio's death would be unfairly affected as computer science majors now forced to choose between Credit/No Credit for his course or using it for their major.

Some faculty expressed concern about the proposed amendment and the motion more generally. One professor said she believes the provision to extend Credit/No Credit to major and minor requirements allows students to pass fundamental courses they need to do well in without actually doing well.

Another professor stated his concern that another student might see how the student deaths this semester resulted in this loosening of Credit/No Credit rules and think that they would be doing something for the student cause by taking their own life. The professor explained his worry that a struggling student would think "I can sacrifice myself to help other students" if the Faculty Council approved the resolution.

Dean of Students Derek Doucet, Dean of Junior and Senior Experience Scott Barnicle and Dean of Sophomore Experience Matt Longman attended the Faculty Council meeting to express their support for the motion.

Longman described the extension of Credit/No Credit as a "timely off-ramp" for students who are in need of extra help and are not being reached by the support systems currently in place.

Doucet said the proposed motion, including the amendment to include major and minor requirements, is in line with the college's postvention approach of allowing students the flexibility to process the tragedies how they need to as individuals. This flexibility, Doucet continued, might involve taking a course Credit/No Credit this semester for some students.

Barnicle added that the motion is valuable because it provides students with a concrete, established path to follow to take care of themselves and mourn the recent losses in the community.

The Office of the Registrar followed up on Monday, Nov. 20 with an email to students explaining some logistics of the extension of the course drop and Credit/No Credit deadline through Dec. 8. Students must remain in a minimum of 3 credits for the fall semester and can invoke Credit/No Credit for one course if they are enrolled in courses totaling at least 4 credits this semester, according to the email.

The email also stated that students can invoke the Credit/No Credit or Pass/D/Fail options a maximum of two times throughout their academic careers, and a minimum grade of C- is required to receive credit for a course.

The SGA expressed their gratitude toward Faculty Council for extending the course drop and Credit/No Credit deadline in their email announcing the motion passing. "We would like to extend a lot of thanks and appreciation to our faculty who voted on this, our deans who advocated on our behalf, and everyone from the administration and the student body who contributed to making this happen," SGA wrote.

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College continues plans to renovate Proctor Dining Hall, convert to student center

By LIV SANCHEZ
Staff Writer

Students were asked for their input on the design of a new student center last spring when members of the Middlebury administration began actively planning a complete renovation of Proctor Dining Hall's current design. The college plans to expand the space significantly into a four-story student center and dining hall with the capacity to seat 1,200 students — surpassing Ross Dining Hall as the largest food space on campus by more than 400 seats.

The student center project is part of a larger campus transformation plan that also includes the newly renovated Christian A. Johnson Memorial Building, the first-year dorm currently in the process of being constructed next to Coffrin Hall set to open in 2025 and the planned constructiono f a new art museum where Battell Hall currently stands, according to David Provost, executive vice president of Finance and Administration.

Provost has taken a lead role in planning the renovation after feeling disappointed by the state of McCullough Student Center when he first arrived on campus.

"My goal is to create a space where every student feels welcomed and wants to be hanging out, because that doesn't exist here today," Provost told The Campus.

He noted that although the dining halls, Athletic Center and BiHall are popular places for students to spend time in at certain parts of the day, other spaces on campus lack a similar atmosphere.

"Everywhere else, you're like, 'Where's the people?'" he added.

Provost noted that the cupola, or small tower on the top of the building, from the current Battell Hall will be preserved as a tribute to the estimated 20,000 students that have lived in Battell over the past 70 years. The preserved cupola will serve as a social gathering space within the new art museum.

Provost explained that the college was planning on creating accommodations for student clubs in the new student center. "You can imagine small to larger-sized meeting rooms where clubs and student groups can come together," he said. "The vision of it is to truly create a living room where every Middlebury student feels welcome and wants to hang out."

Provost also noted that the building will remain open during nighttime hours in response to student feedback. "The vision was to make this a very active building — think 20 hours a day. There will be a full new dining facility there, and there will also be a nighttime dining facility."

The preliminary planning for the new building began in 2008, envisioning a complete tear-down of Proctor Dining Hall and the construction of an entirely new, 150,000 square foot student center. Recent developments, however, have resulted in planning for renovation and expansion to Proctor instead of a total reconstruction.

The location for the new student center was chosen because the current Proctor Dining Hall stands at the intersection of many dormitories and is an active spot on campus, according to Provost.

While the proposed design has changed many times, Provost said, the team working on the project is currently focusing on fundraising before they begin construction. Middlebury partnered with Philadelphia-based Voith and Mactavish Architects to create a preliminary design of the renovated structure.

The design team planning the renovation envisions the new student center as a hub for student needs on campus. Provost described how when he first arrived on Middlebury's campus, students had to go to specific offices spread throughout campus for their various meetings and needs.

"That's not very student-centric; that's department-centric," he said. "So my vision here is to create a one-stop shop where 90% of all student needs can be met."

Provost mentioned the possibility of moving the Anderson Freeman Resource Center (AFC), a space for first-generation students and students of color, to the new student center as an example of consolidating student needs on campus.

Jenna Abraham '26 expressed her enthusiasm about the project, but shared some reservations about the reality of renovating Proctor and how the college is allocating its money.

"I think the renovation is a fabulous idea. However, I think there may be a lot of student outrage," Abraham said. "One, the construction is a pain in the butt, and I personally don't want that all four years of my time here. Two, a lot of people are calling for changes within administration, student health resources, students of color resources, and for any money to not go to those things might be controversial."

Ellen Sosa-Pena '26 shared her perspective on how it benefits the college to have some campus resources remain separate from the new student center, such as the AFC.

"I feel like moving [the AFC] to the student center would defeat the purpose of it. And I'd like to see more study rooms — also, that could be a place for a smaller-scale career-aid center, and tutoring also, because the [Center for Teaching and Learning] is in the library and the [Center for Careers and Internships] CCI is all the way down by Twilight. So maybe they could have some representatives in the student center."

The planning team held a charrette, a structured way of collecting input on a project from various stakeholders, on April 27–28 2022. Members of the college community were invited to Wilson Hall and Proctor Dining Hall to view renderings of potential designs for both the exterior and interior of the new student center and share their thoughts. Students were offered sticky notes on which they wrote feedback and stuck to poster boards with potential designs on them.

Provost does not yet have an estimate for when construction will begin or be completed. "We are currently in the fundraising phase, and this year we will move to the design phase, and so we will further define the scope of what will be in there. And we'll be soliciting student input," he said.

MIDD KID 2.0 VIDEO BRINGS AN UPDATED VIEW OF LIFE AT MIDDLEBURY

Thirteen years after the viral MIDD KID video Malick Thiam '24 and Jordan Saint-Louis '24 create a new video and legacy

By ORLY BERKE
News Editor

COURTESY PHOTO
Matthew Gamez '25 (left) and Leigha Francis '25 (right), two of the three lead artists on the Midd Kid 2.0 song, went to the Snow Bowl to film the accompanying music video.

The influence of the original "MIDD KID" video, released in 2010, cannot be understated: It garnered over 1.7 million views on YouTube and cemented many of Middlebury's stereotypes in pop culture. Now, thirteen years later, Malick Thiam '24 and Jordan Saint-Louis '24 are working together to create not only a new, high-quality song and music video, but also one that more accurately reflects Middlebury and its current culture.

This is not the pair's first foray into directing. In 2022, Thiam and Saint-Louis created a viral music video cover for the song "Calm Down" by Rema. Directed and shot by the two friends, the video has since garnered almost a million views and led the two to continue their work together.

Following the success of "Calm Down," the pair planned to begin working on a new Midd Kid video the following year. However, Thiam ended up studying abroad for the entirety of his junior year, pushing back the creation of the video until this past summer.

Neither Thiam nor Saint-Louis have any formal musical experience. So, they started by reaching out to the Middlebury Music Department Chair Damascus Kafumbe. Kafumbe directed them to McLean Macionis, professor of the practice in the music department at Middlebury who owns his own music label and has previously produced music scores for television shows. Macionis was a college student when the original Midd Kid video was released and was eager to assist when asked to participate in the new production.

"I went to school at Occidental on the West Coast, but that first video sent little ripples across the country to all of us that were going into school. I know 1.7 million views is probably not a lot today, but ten years ago that was a big deal. So when I heard that they wanted to do the second, I said, 'I can't resist,'" Macionis told The Campus.

Originally, Macionis was just providing guidance and connecting students in his class to the project, but as time went on he took a bigger hand in the actual production, becoming more invested in providing expert assistance. Thiam and Saint-Louis would send Macionis playlists, tracks and even just beats they enjoyed and wanted to include to help craft the song.

The original Midd Kid song was written in a 2010s style of parody pop, and was more focused on comedy and making fun of Middlebury. Unlike the original song, Midd Kid 2.0 was written to be less of a spoof and more of a listenable piece, with months of work and production for a high-quality song that still carries some humor and specific Middlebury references.

"Modern pop, modern afro house, reggaeton. It pulls from all those different diverse influences to create one track that you would think, 'Oh, this could appear on a Spotify playlist,'" Macionis said.

Once the song had lyrics and instrumentals planned, Thiam and Saint-Louis began their first shoot at the beginning of October. The two put out an Instagram story on Wednesday night asking for people to come to a sunrise shoot at the Middlebury Snow Bowl on Friday morning not expecting many people to show up given the 6 a.m. call time.

"We sent that out and we got about thirty-ish people to get up at 5 in the morning and show up at the Snowball," said Thiam in an interview with The Campus.

Since then, the two have shot multiple scenes, including a party in Palana Social House, a walk to Twilight Hall, and even a special guest appearance. The video has gained such momentum that they were even able to partner with Athletic Brewing Company, a non-alcoholic beer company founded by Middlebury alumni Bill Shufelt '05, to feature the drinks in their video.

Though iconic in its inception, the original Midd Kid video faced backlash for its portrayal of Middlebury as well as the lack of diversity in its casting. Alpana Bakshi '26 recalled watching the video after applying to Middlebury, but before committing to attend.

"It's fairly dated so I wasn't sure what to make of it. I watched it again after I arrived and thought it was funny because there are some things that are still true. It was giving very white student athlete," Bakshi said.

Current Midd Kids can look forward to seeing the video soon: "Midd Kid 2.0" will be premiering this Saturday, Dec. 8 at 8:30 p.m. in the Grille.

When asked about her hopes for the upcoming video, Bakshi said she is looking for greater diversity not only in the people but also in the experiences portrayed. Thiam and Saint-Louis were both well aware of some of the more problematic elements of campus culture in the original video, but stated that they are looking forward to showing an updated yet still authentic side of Middlebury.

"With the song, with the video, we really want to convey a different sense of Middlebury and like, ideally when people watch it, not even people who really go here, but people who are gonna come here in the future... they feel good watching and they see themselves in it," Saint-Louis said.

Vermont Superior Court denies college's motion to dismiss Mead lawsuit

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between parties and expert witnesses are disclosed. Both parties have agreed to an Alternate Dispute Resolution stipulation that the case be ready for trial by June 14, 2024.

When the college announced the removal of the "Mead" name from the chapel, on Sept. 27 2021, it was accompanied by the formation of a committee tasked with educating the college community about Middlebury's decision, as well as considering whether and how the chapel should be renamed.

A subsequent announcement on April 18, 2023 named the members of the education committee — which includes faculty, staff, senior administration, and students — and stated that their task last spring "[would] be to focus on educational materials only." The committee members agreed to keep their deliberations confidential during their first meeting.

The committee's work is ongoing and no announcements have been released since last spring. There is no public timeline for the committee's work, and it is planning various events and outreach activities. Discussions could either result in a public announcement or a confidential recommendation to the college's senior leadership group.

The lawsuit's political undertones relating to cancel-culture were spelled out explicitly in an op-ed by Douglas in The New York Sun when he criticized the college for their actions. Douglas wrote that sees the issue as one of fairness and thinks of it as a case of applying present-day morals to history.

"Middlebury is covering up its own history of teaching and promoting eugenics... and throwing Governor Mead under the bus," Douglas told The Campus in September.

Daniel Silva, associate professor of Luso-Hispanic Studies and director of the Twilight Project, studies eugenics in various political contexts around the world. In an op-ed in The Campus in Dec. 2021, Silva described the history of eugenics and Middlebury's role in actively promoting harmful and unjust theories.

"The story of Mead is just one example of Middlebury's close relationship with eugenicists and eugenics supporters, which included trustees, donors, professors and administrators." Silva wrote. "It is, therefore, not a stretch to consider that eugenicists and eugenics sympathizers, were, to some degree, trained at Middlebury,"

Silva's op-ed was quoted in the plaintiffs' arguments in order to defend John Mead's legacy and to demonstrate the ubiquitous nature of eugenics at Middlebury during Mead's lifetime. Silva shared disappointment with how his statements were taken out of context, and expressed concern about the lawsuit's publication of a reactionary stance that brushes aside substantial pushes for justice as "woke culture."

"If the spirit of the lawsuit is couched in this reactionary stance towards pushes for justice, that reduce pushes and movements for justice to woke culture gone mad, then my op-ed is woke culture gone mad," he told The Campus. "So why are you citing and cherry-picking from my op-ed?... That's concerning."

Silva spoke favorably of the educational efforts that the college has undertaken and encouraged using the built space of the chapel to memorialize communities that have been affected by eugenics."The goal of my op-ed was to talk about eugenics within contexts of justice and pushes for indigenous sovereignty," he added.

Douglas also expressed support for the efforts by the committee, but ne said that the college must first return the "Mead" name to the chapel.

"I'm always for more information than less... but a deal's a deal in terms of the name on the building, and I really think it needs to be restored," Douglas said.

Feminist Trivia, project symposium encourage students to act on intersectional issues

By ELLIE TRINKLE
Staff Writer

The Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies Department collaborated with students and professors alike to host two events last week focused on intersectional gender and sexuality issues. The first event was Feminist Trivia night held on Tuesday evening in Wilson Café, followed by a final projects symposium on Thursday evening in the Axinn Center for the Humanities.

Carly Thomsen, associate professor of Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies and an organizer of the events, described the value of making and playing games for learning feminist, queer and trans theory.

"In this case, trivia was the expression of a pedagogical approach that grounds all of my classes. Games are fun and they invite people into conversations who might not otherwise have them," Thomsen wrote in an email to The Campus.

Thomsen and several students in her Feminist Foundations class that helped organized the trivia night invited Kelly Sharron, professor of Gender Studies and Sociology at the University of Kansas, to host the event. Sharron is the producer and host of the trivia app called Trivia Time, and previously worked alongside Thomsen on a trivia show that was included in the Reproductive Justice Mini Golf Course featured in the college hockey rink this past spring.

Sara McKillip '25, a student organizer of the trivia event, credited Sharron as being very helpful in making the event possible.

Students in Thomsen's Feminist Foundations class this fall worked on crafting questions for the trivia event on reproductive labor; affect labor, or work that produces emotional experiences; and the "do what you love" theory that working in a job you love allows employers to exploit their workers. The students worked through a series of peer workshops and a round of final revisions with Sharron before finalizing the trivia questions.

"We had a pretty decent turnout with about 9 teams participating in both rounds. The audience was very excited and engaged during the two games of trivia which also made it more fun to host," McKillip wrote in an email to The Campus, calling the event a success.

The second round of trivia questions will be featured on Sharron's podcast.

Another organizer of the event, Elsa Bolinger '26, described how the process of creating the trivia game showed her the difficulty of translating scholarly ideas into an accessible format for audience members without a background in gender studies. "[We] learned to think in the ways that we're taught to think through the class, while still preserving the nuances of the ideas," Bolinger wrote in an email to The Campus.

On Thursday evening, students from several courses within the department this semester shared their final projects in Axinn as a part of the Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies Symposium. Student projects included games, zines, podcasts and initiatives aimed at promoting equity and justice within the gender, sexuality and racial spheres.

Axinn was decorated with student posters featuring slogans such as "positivity turned poison" and "media's victims," commenting on the toxicity of the body positivity movement. All students participating in the symposium read the same six texts in their classes at the beginning of the semester, which addressed how feminist and queer theory and activism sometimes clash with one another in how we understand gender, sex and the body, Laurie Essig, professor of Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies wrote in an email to The Campus.

"It was a great way to get the conversation started that sometimes our "commonsensical" ideas about gender/sex/body are well-intentioned, but probably wrong and would benefit from being in conversation with feminist and queer studies," Essig wrote.

Adelle Macdowell '26, Daisy Kulina '26, El Fahey '26 and Maya Alexander'26, students in the Gender and the Body course, recorded a podcast titled Intersection(Re) ality that was featured at the symposium. The podcast discussed the challenge of defining the term "intersectionality," while assessing whether or not intersectionality is something to which our society should strive.

In generating the idea for the project the group was inspired by a reading they did in class by Siobhan Sommerville about common misconceptions of intersectionality, Alexander said. "I think what really caught our attention was the misconception that Somerville presents about intersectionality, it's not just adding up people's levels of oppression but it's about how race, gender, sexuality, etc. bounce off of each other and are an interwoven web," she added.

Annie Lee '23.5, Elio Farley '24.5 and Roxy Alvarado '25 created a zine for their Gender and the Body class that drew between Victorian constructions of gender and power dynamics and contemporary issues. Through images of the Victorian lady and child, the group looked at how these constructions relate to Middlebury's institutional dynamics, and what identity groups receive protection from the college.

According to Alvarado, the group chose images of Victorian children to suggest that the purity, innocence and protection they received was similar to the privilege given to certain groups on campus. "It's really based on spreading the message of what the school is trying to cover up," she added.

Jahnavi Choraria '25 and Marina Prikis '25, students in Essig's Making Feminist Media class, used their project to challenge the statement that people of a certain sexuality were "born that way." Their ideas were inspired by the work of Mount Holyoke Assistant Professor of Political Science Joanna Wuest, who argues that portraying homosexuality as a mental illness makes people view it as innate, but it is not actually something that people choose for themselves or for which they should be held accountable. The group aimed to add complexity to the term "born this way" through a combination of posters and pop culture references.

As a part of Feminist Foundations, Connor Curtin '26, Reilly Isler '25 and Sophia Cole '25 designed a workshop for athletic teams seeking to expand knowledge of pronouns and create a more inclusive,socially conscious environment at Middlebury. The group designed a 45-minute talk to be given to athletic teams at Middlebury, breaking down key terms relating to pronouns and inclusion and encouraging students to engage in educational activities. They hope to implement the talk this spring and deliver it to 100% of varsity sports teams and 75% of club sports teams. The group designed an outline for a 45 minute talk to relay to athletic teams.

Other projects showcased at the symposium included a collection of zines by Kamryn You Mak '23.5, Kassie Olaleye '26 and Talia Chang '26 exploring the intersectionality of being queer and a person of color, a feminist self-defense workshop by Maggie Harper '26 and Ruthie Brown '25.5, a breakdown of how Barbie and American Girl Dolls impact young girls by Ashley Aparicio '26 and Christina Ritter '26 and a design-your-own Latina doll to challenge stereotypes by Yenifer Abad Santiago '25.

Both the Feminist Trivia and Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies Symposium events gave attendees the chance to play, create and learn about how expressions of and pressures to conform to gender affect our society and how we can strive to improve them.

Editors' Note: Adelle MacDowell '26 is a layout editor for The Campus.

ELLIE TRINKLE/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Students from various GSFS classes lined the hallway of Axinn displaying their final projects.

COLLEGE DIRECTS NEW $4.9 MILLION GIFT TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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with the potential to direct the gift toward student mental health, according to McCall. She crafted a list of the four priorities, based on needs expressed by students, staff and community members, McCall wrote in an email to The Campus.

These implementations come at a time in which colleges and universities are reckoning with how to deal with mental health. The funding also follows the deaths of Evelyn Mae Sorensen '25 and Ivan Valerio '26 on campus this fall, and subsequent calls for the college to allocate more resources to mental health services

"Almost every college and university presidents' meeting I have had in the past years features mental health challenges as a major part of the national higher education landscape," President Laurie Patton wrote in an email to The Campus. "The pandemic and post-pandemic worlds have put these issues into even higher relief."

The addition of a new licensed counselor will contribute to existing one-on-one counseling services, groups and community programming, according to McCall.

"We know that this is important to students and made changes to our model in the past to ensure that students' first encounters with Counseling were with licensed counselors," McCall wrote.

Funding for identity-based mental health and wellness programs and retreats will respond to student interest in more opportunities to build relationships with peers and mental health clinicians outside of traditional clinical services, according to McCall. The college has hosted BIPOC Mental Health and Well-being retreats in fall 2023, spring 2022, and fall 2021, which McCall called a great success. Health services has continued to collaborate with identity-based student organizations to design programming for LGBTQ students and other identities.

"We hope to create a retreat schedule that we can facilitate each semester so that they become part of the fabric of our campus community and that these longer-format experiences are available to as many students as possible," McCall wrote.

The college will also add to its existing two graduate student training programs, though the current lack of compensation for such positions has limited the pool, she stated.

"Adding stipends is an important step toward equity and will allow us to maintain accessibility to our high-quality training programs," McCall wrote.

Ultimately, McCall wrote, the goal is for some interns to stay in Vermont long-term.

Prevention efforts will add to existing programming like "Body Acceptance Week" and "Stressbusters," which aim to share coping strategies, self-advocacy skills, build belongingness and provide mental health training for students, staff and faculty, McCall wrote.

Outdoor programming will include Forest and Nature Therapy guided walks, retreat spaces at Bread Loaf and partnerships with student organizations and staff in Outdoor programs.

The college will continue to consult with these groups in further developments. McCall encouraged students to reach out to the Center for Health and Wellness if they have input as to how resources should be allocated.

"We know that taking care of community mental health isn't something that only happens behind the doors of a counselor's office and we are looking forward to this funding supporting more ways that counselors, integrated care specialists, health educators and other staff can partner with students on programming to meet their needs," McCall wrote.

In the past few years, the college has had regular meetings on mental health, and invested in making sure students have access to care around the clock, increased staffing, improved systems of care and launched programs in preventative mental health care and peer education, according to Patton.

"While all of these are vibrant programs, we know that challenges remain and we can do even more," Patton wrote. "Most importantly, I believe Middlebury can think about these issues creatively."

McCall attributed the spotlight on young adult mental health to a decrease in stigma, advances in telehealth, increases in the number of students who are coming to college with experience with mental health services and increases in the number of students who are coming to college with existing diagnoses.

"Institutions of higher education have needed to shift their service models for a long time and the last five or so years have pushed innovation to move at a faster pace," McCall wrote.

The college will share further details on plans to enhance mental health services through procuring future gifts, stating in the Dec. 5 email that the student experience is the third pillar of its "For Every Future" fundraising campaign.

Prior to this announcement, the college had not explicitly stated that any funds from this campaign under the banner of "experience" or elsewhere would be directed towards mental health services.

"As we reach the end of a painful and challenging semester, we want to say how much we appreciate input from and engagement with students and other members of our community," the email to the Middlebury community read.

The Campus is hiring!

We are seeing applicants for the News, Opinions, Sports and Multimedia sections. We are also looking for Layout and Communications editors — no prior experience with The Campus necessary. Please send a one to two paragraph statement of interest and brief writing sample to campus@middlebury.edu. We are always welcoming new writers, too. Email campus@middlebury.edu and we can help you get started.

TOWN HALL THEATER PREPARES TO BEGIN NEW CONSTRUCTION

By EDITH MAUCH
Staff Writer

The Town Hall Theater, a focal point for the town of Middlebury and college students alike, is expanding. But the theater is no stranger to change. Since the 1800s, it has held space for a variety of community spaces, including an opera house, town offices and a failed furniture store. In its current form as a performing arts hub for the town of Middlebury and Addison County at large, it hosts plays, musical performances, camps and classes for children and adults, weddings, memorial services and more.

With all this activity, the theater is bursting at the seams, according to Lisa Mitchell, the executive director. In 2018, it bought 66 Merchants Row, adjacent to its current building at the intersection of Merchants Row and South Pleasant Street, when it was vacated by Steve's Diner. The largest addition is a public plaza with an outdoor stage, which will allow for outdoor performances, as well as food and beverage popup stands. Other renovations will add a learning and event center, a scene shop capable of providing technical education, and the Doug and Debby Anderson rehearsal studio, which will also be used as a small performance and event rental space.

"The board searched for years for space that could meet our needs, amplify our regional impact, and secure our sustainability," Mitchell wrote in an email to The Campus. "This project is not only an expansion of our mission; it also means a new business plan that ensures Town Hall Theater's generational sustainability."

"It will also be amazing to have a scene shop where we can build sets, and a rehearsal room and the courtyard performing space where we can envision doing various readings and shows," said Melissa Lourie, a member of the Town Hall Theater board of directors.

Bread Loaf Corporation will start construction on the expansion on Dec. 14. The estimated completion date for the project is Dec. 18, 2024.

"Our vision with this expansion is to create a welcoming, accessible hub for learning, performing and gathering," wrote Mitchell.

In less than two years, the theater has raised $6.2 million toward the project's $7.6 million total cost. It will launch its community giving phase on Dec. 12.

"Our fundraising success to date is thanks to a generous gift from Middlebury College, a grant from the state of Vermont, and the support of many generous individuals, businesses and organizations," Mitchell wrote.

The project has also gained positive attention at the local and state level. The Middlebury SelectBoard and regional economic development authorities wrote letters in support of the expansion, which subsequently helped secure a $500,000 grant from the state. Vermont Senator Peter Welch also nominated the project for Congressionally Directed Spending.

"Thankfully, this effort has received zero public pushback. To the contrary, we are fortunate to enjoy an outpouring of public support and enthusiasm," wrote Mitchell.

COURTESY PHOTO/BREAD LOAF CORPORATION
Construction at Town Hall Theater will start on December 14.

Still, the theater needs to raise $1.6 million to complete the project, and according to Mitchell, the final funding push can often be the hardest. However, she and others working on the project remain optimistic due to the force of the theater as an economic and cultural driver in the Middlebury community.

"Personally, I could not be more excited or bullish on the future of the arts in our region — or [Town Hall Theater's] role as a cultural driver! We could not be more grateful for everyone's support," Mitchell wrote.

For those wanting to see the new space for themselves, the Town Hall Theater will have a ground-breaking ceremony on Tuesday, Dec. 12 at 12:30 p.m. The ceremony will include Middlebury College President Laurie Patton, Executive Vice President of Finance and Administration David Provost, as well as other local and state leaders.

"Everyone is invited to attend and be part of this historic moment," wrote Mitchell.

Midd Night Stroll returns to downtown Middlebury for 2023 festivities

By ALEXA BRYANT
Contributing Writer

Midd Night Strolls is back this year, welcoming students and community members to enjoy discounted deals in stores, live performances, illuminated falls and holiday cheer.

The event is a part of the Very Merry Middlebury initiative hosted by the Better Middlebury Partnership, a civic organization dedicated to supporting local businesses in Middlebury. This year, the strolls will take place on Dec. 7 and Dec. 14 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

On Dec. 7, Middlebury students can expect to find a little extra student-oriented fun in town, as the Student Government Association (SGA) has partnered with the Better Middlebury Partnership to host Midd Kid Night for a third year. Students can visit the heart of downtown and enjoy hot cocoa, food trucks and performances by music groups, such as The Avenue, a group that began when guitarist Samuel Medina '25 and frontman Jared Ahern '25 met as students at Middlebury.

Orlando Caceres '25, co-director of student experience, said he is especially excited for this year's event after working to make it a special occasion for students.

"Everyone deserves the opportunity to be rewarded after a really difficult semester," Caceres said. "The goal is for students to get as much out of the event as possible."

To ensure students are able to take advantage of all the event has to offer, Caceres and the SGA have worked to make the event more accessible this year, arranging shuttles that will take students into town from ADK Circle on campus. Additionally, students will have the ability to pick up $10 of Middlebury Money, which can be used at almost any of the businesses in the town of Middlebury at any time.

The SGA and BMP intend for this check to encourage students to venture into town to stimulate the downtown economy and build local community. In past years, it has done just that, according to Vermont Book Shop Manager Amy Graham.

"It's fun to see students who might not otherwise come in our stores come and check us out, and then they might decide to come back again," Graham said.

Students are integral to the success of local businesses, and the partnership between the SGA and BMP has helped to facilitate a growing relationship between the town and the school. Caceres said he is thankful for the partnership because the differing goals of the two allow them to create initiatives that improve both the town and the college as well as the sense of community between them.

"[The partnership] is mutually beneficial because they're looking out for one side and we're looking out for the other and together we're trying to make it work for everyone," Caceres said.

Graham added that local businesses are appreciative of the effort to bring students into town and include them in the community.

"It's a win-win for everyone," Graham said.

Students, too, have taken note of the effort to bring the town and college community together. Liza Toll '24 said she enjoys Midd Kid Night, not just because it's an opportunity to get off campus on a weeknight, but also because it makes the college feel less isolated.

"As students, we spend so much time on campus doing college-centered activities, but we live within a larger community, too, that we're so often separated from," Toll said.

Over 30 merchants will offer extended evening shopping, special deals and promotions during the two Midd Night Strolls. Other Very Merry Middlebury events include free horse and wagon rides through town, pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus, a Hot Cocoa Hut and Midd's Winter Night Bar.

SUSANNA SCHATZ/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
The Midd Night Stroll will take place on Dec. 7 and Dec. 14 this year.

BEHIND THE LABEL: WOODCHUCK CIDER

By CHARLIE KEOHANE
Editor at Large

While perusing the grocery store or scanning a Middlebury party, you can't miss the iconic Woodchuck Cider label. With dozens of flavors and local Vermont charm, Woodchuck Cider, which is operated out of Middlebury, continues to grow after the Covid-19 pandemic and strengthen its connection to the Middlebury community.

Woodchuck Cider was founded in 1991 in Proctorville, Vt., as winemaker Greg Failing experimented with crafting hard cider. The result was Woodchuck Amber, their original cider.

"The original cider maker, Greg, was quite literally making cider out of his garage, which is actually where the name [Woodchuck] comes from," said Bar Manager JC Dugan. "It's in reference to someone that works hard and crafts something with their hands. One of Greg's friends, when he was tasting them on kind of the original iterations of the cider, referred to him as a woodchuck, and the name stuck."

In 2000, the company relocated to Middlebury. They moved to their current location on Exchange Street in 2013 and finalized the Cider House in 2014. The Cider House offers public and private events, tastings and a self-guided tour. The bar currently has 24 ciders, two beers and eight types of canned cider, according to Dugan. It is also home to activities such as line dancing lessons every Thursday.

CHARLIE KEOHANE/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Woodchuck Cidery offers four two-ounce customizable flights for $5.

Woodchuck sources apples locally from Sunrise Orchard in Cornwall, Vt. for their 802 Collection, the company's traditional pairing of ciders.

"We buy half their orchard every year. Because we're just turning [the apples] into liquid anyway, we'll take the drops, the blemishes, the 'imperfect' apples. So then they get to keep all their perfect apples for pick-your-own or selling to grocery stores. So it's a really cool partnership," Dugan said.

While Woodchuck is a New England favorite, it officially achieved national distribution in 2012. The company has been sold and purchased several times over the years and is currently owned by Northeast Drinks Group as of April 2021.

Dugan reflected positively on this acquisition. In addition to a new high-speed canning line, the company is refocusing on growing Woodchuck's brand across the country after its post-pandemic setbacks as well as adding new territories for retail. He also hinted at new flavors and marketing materials coming in 2024.

Dugan explained that having been in business for 32 years, they have established a solid foothold amongst the cider drinking population. He added, however, that they have not found the cider market to be as pigeonholed as some other markets.

"It's an eclectic crowd. And we kind of try and match that with our branding. A lot of our marketing and branding is very much like ciders for everyone. And we make what we like, and we want other people to like it, too," Dugan said.

While Dugan noted that fall foliage season is the busiest time at the Cidery, every season brings new partnerships and events. During the winter, the company is involved at the Snow Bowl through sponsorship activities. Dugan also emphasized the importance of working with local restaurants, including a partnership with Fire and Ice for the Woodchuck Salad, which features the Woodchuck Amber in its salad dressing.

"We're always trying to keep our finger on the pulse and stay engaged in the community. The town of Middlebury has been very great to us and we try and reciprocate that as best we can," Dugan said.

Historically, Woodchuck has hosted a music festival in Middlebury dubbed "Ciderstock," which has featured headliners like Sublime.

As many Middlebury students took gap semesters during the pandemic, Dugan noted significantly more college students visiting the Cider House in the last year and a half. Dugan said he enjoys forming relationships with teams and other organizations that frequent Woodchuck but mentioned the difficulty of not being within walking distance of the College.

Noah Laber '24 and Joe Mairs '24 visited Woodchuck Cidery for the first time this fall.

"It was swanky," Laber said. "Everything was modern and clean. We didn't take the tour, so we didn't get the full experience, I guess, but we got a charcuterie board, and we could make our own flights of drinks. They had a great selection. It was fun."

Mairs also enjoyed getting to customize the flights.

"I liked how you can mix and match the different ciders that they offer there. It provided a very unique experience compared to other cideries and breweries I've been to. They had a wide selection, which I really appreciated," Mairs said.

When asked about his favorite Woodchuck product, Dugan was quick to answer.

"I'm sure my regulars are sick of hearing me talk about it, but the 802 Little Dry, hands down, will probably always be my favorite. We do a slightly different fermentation on that, which leaves a little bit of that yeasty flavor in the cider. It presents as kind of a floral note to some people. It's the most real alcoholic apple juice."

LIV, LOVE, LOCAL: WERNER TREE FARM

Liv, Love, Local is a column highlighting local businesses of Vermont, especially cafés and restaurants in the Middlebury area. Through interviews with owners, I want to highlight the specific successes and challenges that come along with small business ownership in Vermont, the hard work owners and employees put into these businesses, and how these spots

COURTESY PHOTO/TOM RAFALOVICH
The Werner family is able to celebrate unique achievements and time together running the Chirstmas tree farm.

By OLIVIA MUELLER
News Editor

Werner Tree Farm, a family-operated Christmas tree farm in Middlebury, has been selling cut-your-own trees and spreading holiday cheer since 1986. Over the past few years, the Werner family has worked to improve their sustainability practices and diversify the farm's offerings.

Founders David and Cheryl Werner continue to take an active role in the operations of the farm, while their children have also stepped in to take on other responsibilities, with Amanda serving as marketing manager and William tackling a customer-facing role during the busy season helping customers choose, net and take their trees home.

For their peak season in December, the Werners hire about ten seasonal employees to help customers with tree selection. Staff includes local high schoolers and Middlebury College students, including Kristyn Carroll '26. The Werners have previously provided holiday trees to the college and milled lumber for the 2011 Solar Decathlon house.

Caroll said she appreciates the Werners' willingness to teach her the necessary skills for baling and transporting trees and welcoming her as a part of the team.

"It has really opened my eyes to the hard work that goes into maintaining a Christmas tree farm," Carroll wrote in an email to The Campus. "I have learned so much about the processes involved that I had never considered in the past."

Caroll also described the perspective she has gained from working on a farm devoted to sustainability and a deeper connection with nature, as well as having a chance to connect with a different part of the Middlebury community.

The seasonal nature of a holiday business makes December an intense month for the Werners, but the planting and tree care process turns the tree farm into a year-round endeavor. The late winter following the holiday season and the spring mark planting season for young trees, which take about a decade to grow into mature Christmas trees. Summertime calls for trimming each individual tree and managing agriculture and sheep. The Shropshire sheep on the farm are used for grass management because they graze without causing damage to the trees.

"Each year each tree gets trimmed by hand with a thin kind of machete-like knife that's called a shearing knife," Amanda Werner said.

The farm has somewhere between 15 and 20,000 trees, and it takes about five minutes to trim each tree. "That's a considerable amount of time," she added.

In addition to Christmas trees, Werner Tree Farm creates holiday wreaths. Their non-Christmas products include honey, which they have been producing since 2008, as well as horse hay, maple syrup, yarn and lamb meat.

In 2019, the Werners introduced Shropshire sheep to the farm as they work to implement sustainable agriculture practices.

"They're notoriously picky eaters, which is fantastic for us because they don't want to eat the trees, other kinds of sheep and Christmas trees and they'll probably nibble on the trees and probably not the branches you want them to," Amanda Werner said. Shropshire sheep are commonly used in Europe for grass management at tree plantations and apple orchards, she added. Keeping the sheep is labor intensive due to their rotational grazing practice, which requires moving their pasture every two to three days.

"But they've been doing a good job. They keep the grass down. They haven't eaten trees yet. So we're pretty excited about them," Amanda Werner said. Diversifying the farm's product mix is an added bonus, she explained – grazing the sheep has reduced the need for mowing, reducing the use of machinery on the farm.

In addition to sheep, the Werners have implemented several other sustainability initiatives. Four years ago, they added solar panels to the roofs of the buildings, so the farm is now fully solar-powered. The family also uses tree waste products to make compost and perform carbon cycling.

"The trees that don't get bought, the lower branches that got cut off, all of that gets composted and then we put that back on the trees," said Werner. The ultimate goal of implementing sheep is to eliminate the use of synthetic fertilizer on the farm.

Just as this past summer's heavy flooding in Middlebury affected the crop of apple orchards and other farms in town, the heavy rain impacted many trees. The farm received 44 inches of rain this summer, almost triple usual levels.

"We lost probably around 50% of the trees on the farm this year. A lot of those were the younger trees," Amanda Werner explained. Given that it takes about 10 years to grow a Christmas tree, future planting will be an important part of the farm's recovery strategy.

By planting as many trees as possible and implementing sustainable soil management practices to increase survival rates, the Werners hope to bounce back.

As a family, the Werners have also shared in unique achievements, having previously sent special-order trees to the Supreme Court, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and even as far as Bermuda, in addition to providing trees to three Vermont governors.

After nearly 40 years in business, seeing repeat customers is also a highlight for the family. "We have people who came when they were kids with their parents, and because the farm has been going for so long now, they come back with their kids," Amanda Werner said.

Some customers have been coming to the farm since its first year, when the Werners sold 13 trees. The farm has since grown dramatically to an annual volume of 1200-1500 trees.

"There are some customers who are just so nice. They will come in and it'll be such a pleasant interaction," she said. "Just knowing that you've created a good experience for somebody and that they appreciate what you do, and that you've added something to their Christmas season."

Carroll shared a similar sentiment about her work on the farm. "It makes me smile thinking that the work I put in will make many families' days when they are getting ready for Christmas," she wrote. "Now that I know how much work goes into Christmas trees, I have come to appreciate my family's tree so much more."

Amanda Werner stated her appreciation for the supportive nature of the Christmas tree industry in Vermont. "We can contact each other during the season, and it's generally a very friendly bunch," she said.

Whether it's asking for extra supplies of wreath rings or other items, or referring customers looking for out-of-stock items, the collaborative nature of the industry creates a community.

"I mean, it's Christmas tree farms. How cutthroat could people get?" she joked.

MIDDLEBURY RESPONDS TO SHOOTING OF THREE PALESTINIAN STUDENTS IN BURLINGTON

continued from page 1

statement reported by Vermont Public. Authorities have not yet determined whether the shooting can officially be charged as a hate crime, but Murad added that "there is no question it was a hateful act."

Jason J. Eaton, the suspected shooter, was taken into custody early in the morning on Nov. 27. Eaton pleaded not guilty to three counts of second-degree attempted murder, according to Seven Days.

Eaton allegedly approached them, began yelling and shot a handgun at least four times.

Abdalhamid was shot in the gluteal muscle, Ali Ahmad was shot in the upper chest and Awartani was shot in his spine, according to court documents.

Artwani is a student at Brown University, Abdalhamid attends Haverford College and Ahmad is a student at Trinity College. The three men attended the Ramallah Friends School — a Quaker school in the West Bank — according to Seven Days.

In a statement posted to Instagram by Brown's Students for Justice in Palestine on Nov. 28, Artwani emphasized that the violence was part of the larger context of the conflict in the region.

"Had I been shot in the West Bank, where I grew up, the medical services that saved my life here would likely have been withheld by the Israeli army. The soldier who shot me would go home and never be convicted," Artwani wrote. "This is why when you say your wishes and light your candles today, your mind should not just be focused on me as an individual, but rather as a proud member of a people being oppressed."

Middlebury College sent an email to the community on Nov. 27 expressing its support for students and its commitment against hateful violence on campus.

"Our community will continue to remain actively watchful for incidents in Middlebury," the email read. "It can never be said adequately, and it can never be said enough: There is no place for discrimination of any kind on our campus. There is no place for anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian bias or discrimination on the basis of national origin."

The email also encouraged students, faculty and staff to continue to care for one another throughout the semester.

Middlebury's Students for Justice in Palestine and Muslim Students Association released a joint statement on Instagram in response to the shootings on Dec. 2.

"Sunday's shooting has severely damaged our ability to feel safe — a basic necessity that has been eroded constantly in the past as well," the groups wrote. "We are calling on all readers knowing that countless students and alumni share our sentiments — to work to make Middlebury safe for everyone."

Zahra Moeini Meybodi, the college's Muslim chaplain and interfaith advisor, wrote in an email to The Campus that she appreciates the spaces created by administrators, faculty and students to stand against Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian discrimination at the college, but encouraged the development of long-term initiatives as well.

"We are a school that invests heavily in foreign language training, international policy, religious studies and social justice," Moeini wrote. "I feel that investing in diversifying our departments to include Islamic Studies and Palestinian Studies programs or, at the very least, coursework taught by individuals from said regions and religions can be one crucial step forward in educating ourselves about perspectives and communities that are often marginalized and dehumanized in moments of crisis."

Moeini urged the inclusion of courses about Muslim American history, as well as services to assess the effects of discrimination on American Muslims' mental health. These changes, she said, would be instrumental to allowing American Muslim students to feel more heard and seen.

Kaveh Abu Khaleel '26, an international student of Palestinian descent, stated that the shooting shattered any pre-existing illusions of Vermont as a safe haven from gun violence and racist hate crimes.

"I'm afraid to wear my keffiyeh outside of the Middlebury campus, and do not feel safe going to Burlington," they wrote in a message to The Campus.

"We need to be protected on the most basic levels," Abu Khaleel added, going on to describe an incident last month that they described as threatening their safety on campus.

"Just last month, I was doxxed by a Middlebury parent who posted my personal information and location on the Middlebury Parents Facebook group (with thousands of members). The administration and public safety has not given my case the urgency it needs, they haven't given me any measures of protection going forward either," they wrote.

West Asian and North African Students, an organization of which Abu Khaleel is co-president, has organized community dinners and affinity spaces to offer the community safe spaces to grieve. However, Abu Khaleel said that it is a burden to feel like the sole source of emotional support, and encouraged other Middlebury students to express their solidarity with Palestine.

"Wear keffiyehs, advocate for Palestinians as we do not have the privilege nor security of advocating for ourselves," they said.

The shooting has also garnered attention across the state of Vermont. Since the shooting, numerous vigils, sit-ins and rallies have happened in Burlington, Vt., organized by local residents as well as University of Vermont students such as the university's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine.

One such event, organized by former Vermont gubernatorial candidate Christine Hallquist, took place last Sunday night. About 70 people attended, including Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger and the Chief of Police Murad. The crowd, which was a mix of Burlington residents and others who had traveled from other parts of Vermont, thought and meditated together in silence, according to Hallquist.

Despite her involvement in state politics, Hallquist emphasized that she organized the event as a citizen of Vermont.

"We can't look to leadership to solve this problem. This is about our values. I fear the danger and violence in this country. We all have to tone down our rhetoric and be kinder to each other," she said.

In a statement made at a Nov. 28 press conference, Mayor Weinberger said, "The terrible, unprovoked attack of three young visitors to Burlington was a shocking violation of the values of this welcoming and inclusive community. These bright, caring young men are good friends to each other, committed to their families, and are loved and valued by many. They deserved to enjoy a peaceful and joyful visit to our city, not the irreparable violence they endured."

On Nov. 26, Governor Phil Scott made a statement offering the full support of the State of Vermont to Mayor Weinberger and Police Chief Murad, and said federal partners were ready to assist.

"I urge Vermonters to not let this incident incite more hate or divisiveness," Scott's statement read. "We must come together in these difficult times — it is the only way to put a stop to the violence we're seeing."

In a written statement from the White House, President Biden condemned the shooting and offered any additional federal resources needed to aid in the investigation.

"While we are waiting for more facts, we know this: there is absolutely no place for violence or hate in America. Period. No person should worry about being shot at while going about their daily lives. And far too many Americans know a family member injured or killed as a result of gun violence. We cannot and we will not accept that."

BROKEN CULTURE: REOPENING THE MURRAY INCIDENT

Op-Ed

Huthefa Maalim *is a member of the class of 2024.5.*

In the spring of 2017, Charles Murray, a political scientist known for his controversial work "The Bell Curve" was invited by the American Enterprise Institute Club to speak at Middlebury College. His presence sparked student protests that not only disrupted his speech but also escalated to violence which left one faculty injured, drawing national media attention. In the aftermath, President Laurie Patton admitted that the college had not lived up to its foundational values and recognized the need to confront the "deep and troubling divisions" unveiled by the incident. Following these events, faculty issued a public statement, Free Inquiry on Campus, which emphasized the importance of "free, reasoned, and civil speech and discussion" as essential for authentic learning, labeling the prevention of speakers from speaking as a "coercive act." Subsequently, Patton addressed the faculty in a commentary titled "Free Speech, Inclusivity, and the Public Sphere," highlighting the critical situation facing Middlebury College as a leading institution committed to courageous engagement. In this address, she urged faculty members to inspire students to express themselves fearlessly and with conviction, emphasizing the dual role of education in introducing students to a range of ideas and preparing them to positively impact the world. Patton also pointed out the need to balance the challenge of a liberal education with acknowledgment of the hardships faced by students from marginalized communities. Shortly after, the college imposed disciplinary actions on 74 students, with consequences ranging from "probation to official college discipline."

However, this was a missed opportunity to establish explicit standards for limits of academic freedom which has directly undermined our capacity for political discourse. In the absence of clear guidelines, students are left to independently draw the lines of acceptability. And because these vary drastically between individuals, it is common for the red line to become apparent only after a student perceives harm. The issue is further aggravated when our institutions regard this subjective perception as the limit of academic freedom. This situation leads to a cultural atmosphere of self-censorship and mistrust, where students are more focused on steering clear of any perceived harm. This is precisely what befell the Queer Studies House when a student reported discomfort with the acronym "FAGS!" on flyers for the House's Friday Afternoon Group Sessions, a part of their social justice discussions. This report was escalated to the college's Community Bias Response Team (CBRT). Despite the flyers' relevance to queer theory, they were taken down and faced criticism for including a potentially offensive slur. Arthur Martins '23.5 reflected on the incident, stating, "What this instance highlights is the college trying to promote respectability or preserve the certain image, thereby preemptively censoring disruptive speech and thus creating a missed opportunity to engage with the discourse for academic growth." Faculty, supporting the students, defended the flyers under academic freedom. Martins expressed concern that such incidents lead to "tangible anxiety" about making mistakes in speech, which inhibits open and confident participation in academic discussions.

While the college's reaction to the Murray incident might have been driven by intense scrutiny from national media and concerns about its reputation, in hindsight, I believe that the response proved inadequate and counterproductive. By framing the incident primarily as an affront to free speech, the college and the faculty failed to address the deeper questions at hand. In their rebuttal to the faculty statement, the student activists advocated for a "robust, nuanced, and continuing civil debate" on the "unassailable" principle outlined in the faculty's statement. They were not against free speech per se; rather, I believe they raised other critical questions: To what extent does academic freedom extend? Is it appropriate, under the banner of academic freedom, to invite a speaker with "racist" views to campus? For an environment to be truly inclusive and tolerant, is there a need to be intolerant of certain ideologies, and by extension, those who propagate them? If such views are not actively challenged, does this inadvertently lend them legitimacy? And is there a justification for disruption if checks and balances fail and the institution gives legitimacy to someone who propagated intolerable ideas, and if not, why? These are, unfortunately, the crucial questions that our community sidestepped in the wake of the incident.

Furthermore, during the conflict transformation dinner discussing the Israel-Palestine conflict on October 30, my table concurred that Middlebury's environment seems too insecure for nuanced conversations on such complex issues. This perspective has also been echoed by numerous students. In October, Shane Silverman '24.5 critiqued what he called the "illiberal academic culture" at the college in response to the Editorial Board's reflections on the "shortfalls of our intellectual culture." Weeks later, Griffin Fill '23.5 attributed this to the emergence of "outrage culture," a concept he cited as being borrowed from "right-wing" discourse. While these commentators may have some valid points, I contend that progress is unattainable without fully addressing the fundamental structural factors hindering meaningful debate on campus.

With the sixth anniversary of the Murray incident approaching, it's high time to reassess Middlebury's stance on academic freedom and its boundaries. The first step to accomplishing this is a thorough interrogation of how we got here. Middlebury's post-Murray response has produced anything but an effective strategy. It has left students in the untenable position of having to define the limits of academic freedom for themselves. This freedom cannot remain a mutually subjective abstraction. If we are to make any progress on this front, what is needed is a common framework with which to confront it, define it and enforce it. As a community, we have a collective duty to foster a welcoming atmosphere, ensuring our college remains a safe space for engaging in thoughtful and nuanced discussions on challenging subjects.

I LOVE MY BEAUTIFUL NARP LIFE

Op-Ed

Catherine Goodrich *is a member of the class of 2023.5.*

When people ask, "What do you do on campus?" it is most often asked with good intentions. I absolutely hate this question.

Over my time at Middlebury, I have crafted a decent elevator pitch for when I come across this awkward moment in conversation. I say something to the tune of "Oh, I co-host a radio show and help out with the Mountain Club when I can. I just started writing occasionally for The Campus which I've really been enjoying this semester." I feel pressured to avert attention from the fact that I'm not only a NARP (the colloquialism standing for Non-Athlete Regular Person) but a club sport-less, and even club-less, shell of a Midd student. It is hard for me not to worry that my extracurricular blurb may be interpreted by someone as me having a lack of aspirations or motivation. At a school like Middlebury, where a culture of diligence and ambition is nothing if not glorified, this feels like an unthinkable reputation to shoulder.

Extracurriculars at Middlebury are performed with epic sincerity. A Middlebury student's club sport team can and often will become their primary college friend group; a club leadership position can and often will become the center of a Middlebury student's routine; and generally, extracurricular membership is an eminent premise of identity at Middlebury College. It is a privilege to be in an environment where young adults are commended for taking their efforts and talents so seriously. With that in mind, I would also venture to say that these commitments are often over-indulged.

In a popular 1997 article by the Harvard Crimson, "True Confessions of a Harvard Slacker," former director of admissions for Harvard and Radcliffe Colleges, Marlyn McGrath Lewis says, "I do think that most people go through periods of `burnout' or of simply wishing to escape from other people's expectations for a while."

This sentiment rang true for me. In high school, I was a soccer captain, member of student government, Outdoors Club president, and sang in the school choir. At Middlebury, I go to dinner for at least two hours every day and am a regular attendee of Bar Night. Both are fulfilling in their own right.

Over my time at college, I have questioned if Middlebury's culture compels students to join clubs, teams or organizations not just "for fun," but for an external image. The line between personal interest and personal branding is, to me, blurry at best. It feels only natural that on a rural, isolated campus students turn to their hobbies to keep them company. Consequently, these activities become a major component of a student's sense of belonging (and sense of self), for better or for worse.

I gave so many extracurricular identities at Middlebury the solid "college try:" I was a loyal frisbee player for a semester, joined The Noodle for a spell, edited for Midd Geographic, pledged Tav my sophomore fall and attended a number of Women's Rugby practices. I never found my extracurricular glass slipper, and honestly, thank God. I am so glad I tried on so many extracurricular identities at Middlebury, and I am just as glad I could take them off and place them back on the rack.

During this search, I was under the false impression that to forgo an extracurricular passion was to pass up on the resources available to me. A host of opportunities presented themselves once I revised that perspective. This semester, especially, I am shelling out $5 left, right and center to the Middlebury Box Office to see student and faculty shows. I can attend talks by Middlebury Alumni like Shawn Ryan '88, I can go to YouPower spin classes weekly and can take intense, time-consuming courses suited to my academic interests. Most importantly, I am able to give meaningful time and attention to my friendships.

Finding a high level of social satisfaction without leaning on an established group with a common interest was a hard process, but one I found to be worthwhile. The same article by the Harvard Crimson ascertains that "there are a lot of fellow undergraduates who can learn from the guy next door with the empty planner."

A Harvard student featured in the article said, "I'd much rather make the occasional B than be the person who can't ever do anything spontaneously fun, you know, like just go to a movie on a Tuesday night or something, because they can't neglect their workload."

When I look back on my Middlebury experience, I have a strong suspicion I will not regret having had the time to attend my friends' and peers' performances, games and showcases; having the space to go get coffee with a friend after class; to go on a long walk with someone on the TAM; to sit for a few hours to write about a topic I'm invested in.

Earnestly enough, the question, "What do you do on campus?" often also makes me emotional. I carry a deep concern for how Middlebury, and many other colleges, emphasize high functionality and individual prosperity— a culture that can easily exacerbate feelings of unworthiness and intense self-scrutiny. When this question is posed, whether consciously or not, a larger question lurks just behind the surface. The subtext of "What do you do?" is "Who are your people?," "What career are you looking to have?" and ultimately, "Who are you?" In some ways, we've deemed the question "What do you do on campus?" to be a litmus test for how valuable we are as Middlebury students (It should come as a relief that there are over 2,800 valuable ways to be at Middlebury College). It is a heavy millstone we wear and one that I would implore Middlebury to invite a little levity to.

SARAH SAYS: EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT LOVE

Op-Ed

Sarah Miller *is a member of the class of 2024 and is an Editor At-Large for The Campus.*

On a semi-weekly basis, Sarah Miller shares her thoughts on culture and campus life.

As I approach the end of my final fall semester at Middlebury, I have found myself grappling with the realization that, forgoing any eleventh-hour surprises, I will likely graduate without experiencing a romantic college relationship. That fact has forced me to admit that over the past couple of weeks, it's not just the lack of light that's been getting me a little down. Even as I remain grateful for the love of my friends, I am sad not to have experienced romantic love at Middlebury and sadder still to feel so trite.

Today's single, undergraduate woman is stuck between a rock and a hard place. In many ways, women are still taught their value revolves around attracting and keeping a man, but within our culture's era of corporatized, #girlboss feminism, it's seen as retroactive, intellectually weak and, most of all, deeply cringe to admit to wanting love.

Over the summer, I read Dolly Alderton's memoir "Everything I Know About Love," which I liked so much that I stole its title for this article. The memoir begins in her adolescence and follows her university career and wild twenties in London. Laughing along as she rendered her life with humor and vulnerability, I still found myself thinking, "Ok. All these adventures in dating are fun, but when is she going to stop crying and get her happy ending?" This is the memoir's great bait and switch, because (spoiler alert!), Alderton never gets the traditional happy ending.

Instead of a grand romantic gesture, the memoir climaxes when she says "Because I am enough. My heart is enough. The stories and the sentences twisting around my mind are enough. I am fizzing and frothing and buzzing and exploding. I'm bubbling over and burning up." It's a lovely point in the book, one of those electrifying passages that I wish I could paste over my heart.

After centuries of messaging that women are worth nothing without men, these alternatives are essential. But, as I contemplated my own romantic loneliness, it left me feeling like a double failure. Not only had I failed to catch a man, but I had also failed to properly self-actualize. If the sum total of what I needed was supposed to be inside of me all along, then why was I spending so many nights sad that I didn't have a boyfriend?

Was I really so shallow and boring?

In many ways, my college life overflows with joy. I have a wide circle of amazing friends, enjoy poring over Shakespeare and poetry and get to call those glorious green mountains home. I don't know if my life will ever be so rich and brilliant as it is now on my halcyon campus. Fittingly, so close to the holiday, I never run into trouble noting gratitude.

Because, despite the requisite years of adolescent insecurity, I am finally in love with myself. I have fallen in love with the shape of my reflection in the panes of storefronts, with the sweep of my laugh that often rings like a cackle, with my mind that entertains me for hours and with my loud personality that is finally finished pretending to be anything less than who I am. Yes, like Aldteron, I am "bubbling over and burning up," but I am also lonely and aching.

Of course, my dissatisfaction isn't that surprising.

Middlebury, like most college campuses today, is not a prime environment for the pursuit of love. This generation's declining rates of sex and relationships lead everyone from The Wall Street Journal to CNN to wring their hands, questioning "Is romance really dead?" Consider that alongside the advent of modern "hookup culture" which, contrary to claims of widespread women's emancipation, I can say from personal, anecdotal and scientific consensus, broadly confines sexuality to the terrain of male heterosexual desire.

Now, I'm not out to yuck anyone's yum.

If you've found Middlebury a fruitful sexual or romantic environment, rock on, but I don't think it's a coincidence that the most celibate generation is also the loneliest. And last year's Zeitgeist survey found 44% of respondents had been in a slightly monogamous "thing," though only 26% selected it as their ideal relationship.

One of the final conclusions of Alderton's book comes when in conversation with a friend she admits to insecurity over never having a serious, long-term relationship and the friend responds "You can do long-term love. You've done it better than anyone I know… I'm talking about you and me."

This conversation forms the crux of what Aldteron knows about love.

If, on this campus, my flings with men have petered out over iMessage or Snapchat, then it is from my friends whom I, like Alderton, have learned love. My friends who let me crawl into their beds, who (literally) put my hair out when it's on fire with their bare hands, who forgive me when I'm cranky, hold me when I'm sad and cheer me on when I win.

My friends have taught me to recognize, own and apologize for my faults, and to understand that even the best laid apologies aren't enough to salvage a friendship. In the fall of my junior year, I had a falling out with one of my closest friends. Our "breakup' was dramatic by any standards. We shifted to sitting on different sides of the classes we shared, exchanged awkward hellos and entertained long, circular talks about the issues that had led us to hurt and anger.

When, nearly a year later, I reached out to ask her for a coffee, I told her that I missed her and my life was poorer without her in it. A little teary, she agreed, and slowly we began to knit our friendship back together.

I think comparing the importance of friendship and romantic love creates a false and ultimately unhelpful binary. For one, I don't want to make out with my friends. But I can say that when I lose them it doesn't hurt any less, even if the shape of the hurt is a little different.

By writing this piece, I've had the opportunity to consider why admitting to wanting love seems so cringe. While I maintain this perception is related to basic misogyny, it's also because owning up to things we want means acknowledging we might not get them. To be earnest and to resist cynicism is far braver. So, I've decided to own my open heart as much as I can. At the end of the day, it's my greatest strength.

MiddSafe: creating a safe space over the phone

Op-Ed

Arthur Lyu *is a members of the class of 2024 and MiddSafe advocate.*

"Hello, you've reached the MiddSafe hotline. How can I help you today?"

Power-based personal violence is not just individual occurrences, but structural, community-level problems that require collective actions to remedy. Violence continues to occur on our campus and has pervasive impacts on many students' daily lives. In a 2023 survey by the American College Health Association, 7.5% of college students reported being sexually touched without their consent within the last 12 months, 2% reported being sexually penetrated without their consent and 5% have been victims of stalking. In Zeitgeist 5.0, 18% of student respondents reported being survivors of sexual assault, and 40% had had sexual experiences at Middlebury College that made them uncomfortable. Violence is especially prevalent in situations involving power imbalances, such as class year, gender, race, economic status and sexuality. Students of marginalized identities are disproportionately affected by these issues.

At MiddSafe, we hold firm that experiences of violence are never the survivors' fault. Everyone deserves a safe space to heal and grow from harm. Society has taught many of us to label our experiences as too trivial or ambiguous to get attention; that is not true. The way your body feels matters, and your emotions — whether it is pain, anger or confusion — deserve to be listened to. MiddSafe is here to accompany you, listen to you and support you in figuring out a next step that you feel comfortable with.

MiddSafe is a peer-run hotline for Middlebury students in need of support around sexual assault, dating and domestic violence and stalking. We operate 24/7 while classes are in session, and you can reach us by calling our phone number 802-377-0239. MiddSafe student advocates are certified Vermont crisis workers; we participate in two weeks of training before the start of each fall and receive supervision from the Health and Wellness Education Office throughout the year. As a confidential resource, we will not disclose any information you share, unless there is a clear and substantial risk of danger to self or others.

While professional counseling can be an important part of survivors' healing journeys, students play a powerful role in informing peers on healthy relationships and advocating alongside survivors on a day-to-day basis. As a part of the student community, MiddSafe advocates have knowledge into students' daily lives and understand the barriers survivors often face when seeking care on campus.

It is very common to feel alone and vulnerable in the face of violence, and that loneliness can be compounded in small, secluded communities like Middlebury. Away from family and childhood friends, under stress from academic work and jobs, many of us may feel a pressure to conform to a busy daily routine, even when we desperately need space to express, talk through and reflect on our feelings. Experiences of violence can bring a range of difficult emotions and questions, such as: What has just happened? How should I understand our relationship now? Where can I get STI testing? How can I report this incident? How do I get around campus every day?

We believe that survivors have the best understanding of their experiences and needs, and the role of advocates is to support them in making the right decision for themselves. We recognize that healing means different things to different people — such as connecting to our loved ones and making plans for future safety, taking time off work to care for our physical and emotional well-being or seeking justice through Title IX on campus or the state legal system. We can meet you wherever you are emotionally and physically, whether you are feeling unsafe in a relationship and unsure about what to do next, processing emotions from past experiences of violence, or looking for information on a specific resource.

While Vermont state legislation and the Middlebury Handbook have specific definitions for sexual assault, dating and domestic violence and stalking, we recognize these experiences are often complex and highly specific to every individual. Some of us may describe our experiences in legal terms, while others navigate feelings of discomfort, anger and self-doubt from interactions that seem confusing and are not easily definable.

In advocacy, we feel that it is important to center survivors' own narratives of their experiences, and hold spaces for complex physical and emotional responses. We will not judge or define what has happened; instead, we hope to accompany you in understanding your experiences and figuring out a next step that feels supportive to you.

What can MiddSafe do?

Every call is different, depending on your feelings and needs at the moment. The on-call advocate will give you the opportunity to share your hopes for the call so that we can use our time together in the most supportive way. It is completely okay if you don't have a specific goal in mind and just want to be heard. You can share as much or as little personal information as you would like. If you prefer not to share the specifics of your experiences, we can focus on your emotions at the moment or available resources.

We can support you in listening to you in a safe, non-judgmental space and discussing plans for long-term care. We are also here to help you create and take safety measures that you find helpful, seek medical care (such as meeting with a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, getting STI testing or contraception), or explore reporting options through Title IX or the Middlebury Police Department. Resources we can guide you through include Health Services, Porter Hospital, counseling, college chaplains, TimelyCare, Atria Collective (formerly WomenSafe) survivor support groups and the Title IX office. If you are calling because someone you know has experienced harm, we can discuss ways to both support the survivor and care for yourself.

Many survivors have complex needs that require support from multiple sources. Navigating the many on-campus offices can feel stressful and overwhelming, especially for students new to Middlebury and those of us who are unfamiliar with the American healthcare system. MiddSafe advocates can help by breaking down the process of seeking care into a few manageable steps, such as texting a trusted friend tonight or calling Health Services the next day.

We believe the work of violence prevention and response is critical to creating a safe, nurturing campus community. We hope that more students can join us in this effort, and that we can all learn skills to care for people around us — practicing respect and consent in everyday interactions, recognizing that interpersonal violence is embedded in power and control within broader systems of oppression, and holding spaces for difficult experiences and emotions. Every one of us — especially those with the most power and influence on this campus — has a role to play in contributing to a community where each person feels safe and respected.

If you are interested in becoming a MiddSafe advocate, we recruit new advocates every spring, and we are excited to hear from students passionate about advocacy work.

J-TERM 101: HOW TO EMBRACE WINTER AT MIDDLEBURY

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

As the sun begins to set ever earlier in the afternoon, and the bitter chill creeps into students' dorm rooms, the reality of winter in Vermont slowly but surely sets in across campus. These last two weeks of the fall semester and the looming reality of J-Term represent significant changes to student life on campus.

January offers a much different schedule from a typical semester at Middlebury. For most students, J-Term means more free time — a welcome change of pace for many, but an uncomfortable one for others. If this is your first year here, know that Vermont winter is no joke. The freezing temperatures in December and January make it difficult for many students to get outside like they once did amidst sunny September skies. Keep this in mind when making plans and preparing for the winter months.

Many students trade in their textbooks for skis and pens for poles, choosing to fill their academic void with days of skiing. However, that's not for everyone, and there are many other ways to spend one's time. As we head into the new year, we offer the following tips for making the most of winter at Middlebury, whether this coming J-Term is your first or your last.

We recommend that you enjoy the (limited) daylight and go outside. Even when it is cold, spending time outdoors is important for mental and physical health. You don't have to ski, or do any winter sport for that matter, to enjoy the outdoors in the wintertime. Spending time outside could mean going for a twenty-minute walk or sitting on a bench on campus, drinking a warm beverage and talking to a friend. You will be glad to see the daylight before it gets dark at 5 p.m. and avoid cabin fever.

Revamp and brighten up your space. If you expect to be spending more time in your room over J-Term, consider moving your furniture around or purchasing some new decorations. After all, we are halfway through the year, and a change of scenery could feel nice. Experiment with lighting — holiday lights in your room could brighten up an otherwise dreary day. Sun lamps are also available to borrow at Davis Family Library.

Take advantage of free opportunities. When there is snowfall, the golf course becomes a cross-country skiing haven, and gear is available for free rental through the Gear Room in the Freeman International Center. If you have never tried cross-country skiing before, Club Nordic offers free lessons, and the learning curve is not as steep as with alpine skiing. With other winter activities, such as alpine ski lessons at the Snow Bowl, if cost is a barrier, there are Student Access and Support Grants available, which can be used for both recreational excursions and winter clothing. Outdoor recreation is a great way to take advantage of Vermont's coldest season, and Middlebury offers opportunities to try otherwise more inaccessible sports.

Tackle your to-do list. When you are in the throes of an academically challenging semester, there never seems to be enough time in the day to complete everything you set out to do. Consider keeping a running list of things you'd like to do but don't have the time for presently. Over J-Term, accomplish these things. For example, read a book that has been sitting on your bookshelf, or spend some more time considering post-grad possibilities. J-Term could be a great time for these non-school-related activities.

Sometimes, throw away the to-do list and be spontaneous. J-Term is the perfect opportunity to go caroling, drink hot chocolate inside an igloo or devise an elaborate murder mystery plot with your friends. Say yes to things, and do the activities you always claim you would do if you had more time. For the first time for many Middlebury students, we can afford to waste time. Do activities simply because you can, with no cost-benefit analysis.

Attend winter sporting events. Swimming, basketball, ice hockey, squash, indoor track and Nordic and alpine skiing are all in season during the winter. J-Term can be a fun time to attend sporting events and cheer on your peers. Better yet, if you would like to play some of these sports yourself, consider participating in club or intramural sports.

It is not just about skiing. If you do not know how to ski or have no interest in skiing, you are not the only one, even though it sometimes feels like everyone else here has been on skis since they could walk. Other winter activities may be more up your alley. Sledding, snowshoeing, building snow people or igloos and ice skating are all fun and accessible ways to take advantage of winter in Vermont.

We hope the above list inspires you to try something new this J-Term. If your J-Term is academically challenging and you do not have much time for fun activities, know that you are not alone. While J-Term is intended to be somewhat of a break from the busyness and academic depths of the fall and spring semesters — earning it the name "J-Term, play term" among some students — it is not that way for all. If you are taking an introductory language course or "Microbial Pathogenesis," you may be spending just as much time in the classroom as you do during a regular semester. Even if you are spending little to no time in the classroom because you are finishing up your thesis or doing an independent study, you may be required to tap into new levels of self-motivation and discipline. If your J-Term looks like this and you are not happy about it, know that you are not alone. We recommend you strike a balance between the difficulty of your J-Term course and the heightened social activity on campus — the beauty of J-Term is that there is enough extra time for relaxation, whether you fully commit or choose to relax in moderation.

It is natural to be uncomfortable with having free time. After all, we Middlebury students are used to having daily schedules full of classes on top of socializing, work, clubs or sports. We are used to spreading ourselves thin. As uncomfortable as it might be, J-Term is a good time to sit back, relax and reflect. If you have tried this and you are still seeking more stimulation, whether that be academic, social or activity-wise, such opportunities can be found. Whether it is a difficult and time-consuming course, a goal to ski as much as possible, or a desire to dabble in a bunch of new things, there are always ways to enjoy J-Term.

If J-Term is your cup of tea (or hot cocoa), then these upcoming four weeks will be a fun-filled time of adventure and opportunity. If you feel crammed with coursework or other activities, remember that it is, after all, only four weeks of your life. Flanked by the Winter and February breaks, J-Term is a moment in time on campus that often is over before you know it — for better or for worse.

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The Middlebury Campus

An open letter from Middlebury Jews for Ceasefire Now

Op-Ed

Zev York, Joshua Glucksman *and* ***Lili Platt*** *are members of the class of 2023.5, 2025 and 2025.*

AMELIA LABODA

We are a group of 30 Jewish Middlebury students following in the footsteps of Brown University Jews for Ceasefire Now and many other Jewish students at schools such as Yale, Harvard, Columbia and Vanderbilt across the country who have rallied around important demands for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel. Inspired by many of our Jewish teachings about aligning values and actions, we are calling for students, staff and faculty to boycott all Starbucks products sold on campus.

Starbucks has continued its long-standing practices of anti-labor activism and is currently suing its own union. In October, the union Starbucks Workers United announced its strong support for Palestinians' right to self-determination. Starbucks then sued the union and wrongly conflated the union's support of Palestine with "support of violence in Israel." Starbucks Workers United denied supporting violence, affirmed their solidarity with Palestine and condemned Starbucks for exploiting "the ongoing tragedy in the Middle East to bolster the company's anti-union campaign," said Lynne Fox, president of the union. Silencing the expression of workers undermines Middlebury's values, and here we demand moral consistency from the college. In conversation with many of those involved in the college administration, we know that this decision ultimately falls on the Senior Leadership Group to end Middlebury College's ties with Starbucks at Wilson Café, Midd Xpress and vending machines. Everyone in the Middlebury community can help in this boycott to show the administration that consumer sentiments have changed.

Over the past several weeks, ongoing violence in Palestine and Israel has sparked intensified conflict around the world, including at home. This semester, a Palestinian student was doxxed on the Middlebury Parents Facebook page, continuing several instances where Palestinians have been targeted individually on our campus. In light of these instances on our campus, the devastating hate crime against three Palestinian students just an hour away in Burlington and the resuming of bombing in Gaza, we can wait no longer to act. As a campus, we must align ourselves with the bold values President Patton urged us to consider in her Oct. 12 statement: "to long for justice," "to come together in solidarity" and "to work across borders."

College campuses around the country have become centers for resistance and infighting, and at the extreme, administrations have responded by silencing their own students. We are concerned that former Middlebury President and current Brandeis University President Ron Liebowitz banned their Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chapter. Columbia University went as far to ban both SJP and Jewish Voices for Peace from its campus. We express gratitude that Middlebury, under the current administration, has remained open to dialogue. In the past weeks, students held a widely attended teach-in, movie screenings and a vigil to mourn the deaths of over 15,000 Palestinians. Additionally, academic lectures, diverse panels and conversations are occurring on campus, all of which make possible a circulation of ideas and the emergence of an open, receptive culture.

As Jews, we are acutely aware that many of our ancestors have and continue to be killed in periods of targeted violence. We are devastated by the death of 1,200 Israeli Jews and hope to see the continued return of civilian hostages. We are grieving, but we refuse to let our grief be weaponized to justify civilian death. We stand against genocide, we believe saying "never again" after the Holocaust means never again for anyone and we understand that Jews are only safe when everyone is safe. We deeply understand that many Jews in our college community — parents, alumni and large, external organizations — are pressuring this administration to take a stronger stance defending Israel. However, these voices do not speak for all Jews.

We eagerly await a response to the heartfelt pleas of over 500 alumni, many of whom are Jews, who called for the president and administration to take several actions, including condemning war crimes, calling for a ceasefire and pledging to protect Palestinian students on this campus. We know that the world is in a different place than when the alumni letter was sent—the status of hostages/ceasefire agreements are different, the campus discourse and events have changed and, most importantly, student safety has been compromised. Our needs have evolved, and we need action now more than ever.

There is an established history of activists calling for more ethical financial practices at Middlebury. Over a decade ago, students helped shed light to the hypocritical claim that Middlebury supports diplomatic solutions by revealing that nearly $6 million dollars of the endowment at the time was invested in arms manufacturing. In 2016, students argued that Dining Services was failing to act upon its mission to provide healthy choices to students by selling Red Bull and other energy drinks. The removal of these drinks made national headlines due to both its effectiveness and its commitment to ethical and health concerns. By boycotting Starbucks until a new provider is selected, we are aligning ourselves with this legacy of activism and giving students, faculty and staff the opportunity to take a small but tangible economic action to align Middlebury's mission with our practices. By maintaining a business relationship that "proudly serves" the coffee of an entity that does not stand for free expression and perpetuates harmful rhetoric about Palestine, Middlebury is failing to uphold its three pillars of academic freedom, integrity and respect.

Middlebury's Retail Operations informed us that Starbucks is sold because past students requested it, and we believe a boycott would show the administration that this is no longer the case. There are local caffeine products at both cafés on campus, and buying these drinks instead will ensure that workers behind the counters are respected in our efforts. Crossroads Café at Davis Family Library does not sell any Starbucks products and we mainly encourage purchases there. Visit go/jewsforceasefirenow/ to see a list of our actions in the coming weeks as well as information on what to boycott and why.

A full list of the 30 signatures to this letter can be found in The Campus' online edition.

CLIFF-HANGER: MOUNTAINFILM SHOWCASES ALL TYPES OF TERRAIN

By MAGGIE BRYAN
Senior Arts & Culture Editor

In Maggie Bryan's column "Cliff-Hanger," she reviews outdoor films and explores the power of adventure as a catalyst to conversations over modern issues.

A crunchy crowd of Middlebury students gathered in Dana Hall on Thursday, Nov. 30 for what, at this point, is an annual tradition for the outdoorsy, socially conscious community: Mountainfilm.

Since 1979, the Mountainfilm film festival has taken place annually in Telluride, Colo. The festival, which is one of America's oldest, consists of a collection of documentary films, each of which serves to highlight values of adventure, environmentalism, activism and cultural connection. Since 1999, each iteration of Mountainfilm has gone on a post-festival tour to bring its highlights to outdoor retailers, schools, theaters and other organizations around the world. And for the past few years, Middlebury has been a stop on the tour.

Despite what its name suggests, Mountainfilm captures stories from a diverse array of topographies. This year's tour featured eight films, each of which transported audiences to a new location, from California's South Bay to Capitol Hill. Each film played a role in creating an overall inspiring and thought-provoking experience, yet a few stood out as highlights.

The first film in the series, "To be Frank," follows Frank Paine, a lifelong surfer who continues to find joy in the water. Although isolating for some, Frank views surfing as a source of community. His surfing group, which he calls the "familia," is central to his sustained love for the sport. The film is a powerful yet lighthearted meditation on the importance of community and the value of recreation for all ages.

The third film in the series highlights the service organization 4DWN in South Dallas, which aims to sustainably foster the health of kids and communities, all the while using an unexpected inspiration: skateboarding. Recognizing the simultaneous need for inclusive spaces of recreation and food desert solutions in Dallas, skaters Rob Cahill and Mike Crum created 4DWN. The film itself follows Cahill and 11-year-old skater Zion Carr as they bond over their shared love of skateboarding. Despite the challenges he faces outside of the skate park, under the guidance of Cahill, Carr finds a contagious amount of joy and humor in skating. The audience chuckled as Carr vlogged himself attempting new moves and letting his viewers know that he is 11 years old, a skater and single.

Next up, "Who is a Runner" uses a more intense tone to speak out on the missing and murdered indigenous women crisis. University of Washington runner Rosalie Fish feels a personal connection to the crisis and uses her platform as a racer to raise awareness for it. During each of her races, Fish paints a red handprint over her mouth to represent the silencing of indigenous women.

"Apayauq" follows Apayauq Reitan, the first openly trans woman to compete in the 1,000-mile Iditarod sled dog race. The film simultaneously traces Reitan's figurative journey as a trans woman and her literal journey across Alaska during the race. It is perhaps the most visually stunning film in the series, with breathtaking aerial shots of the Alaskan landscape chronicling Reitan's route through the Alaskan wilderness and giving viewers a slice of the eerily vast setting.

Mountainfilm's final highlight was hardly a mountainous film. Narrated by scholar Gwendolyn Mink, the film follows Patsy Mink, the first congresswoman of color in the United States and Gwendolyn's mother. The film opens with suspense as Gwendolyn describes her mother's principal accomplishment during her congressional career, Title IX, and how she, as a teenager, almost derailed it. Despite showing few outdoor scenes, the film was a powerful representation of the gender dynamics at play in both politics and athletics, as well as an important reminder of the role of legislation in our experiences of equity in recreation.

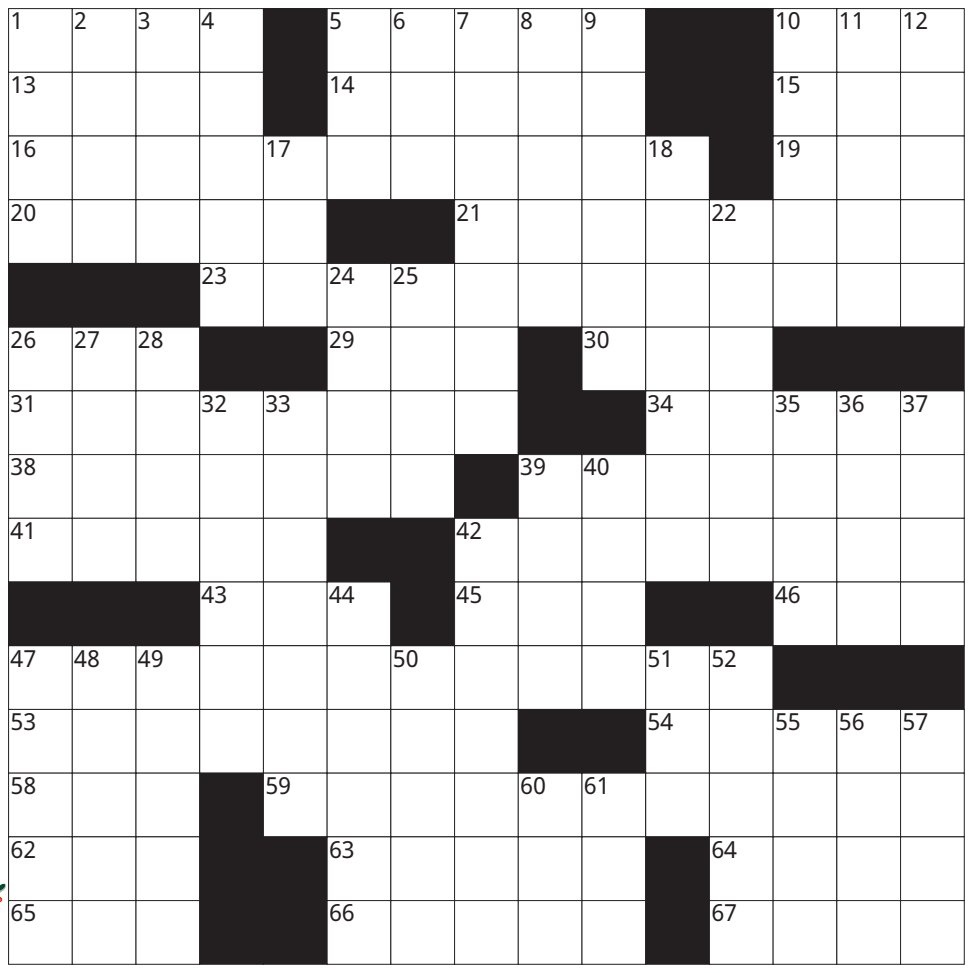
As the voices of Mountainfilm remind us, Middlebury's outdoor scene must reflect more than adventure and athleticism. Giving a platform to diverse narratives is a crucial step in making more inclusive and vibrant scenes of environmentalism, activism, adventure and community at Middlebury as a whole. Vice President of Mountain Club Bella Lucente '25 reflected the importance of this sentiment for Mountain Club in particular in an email to The Campus:

"The show was not simply a montage of impressive outdoor feats but a truly inspiring and diverse portrait of the 'indomitable spirit' that Mountainfilm seeks to capture. These ideas really resonate with the Mountain Club, as creating more inclusive outdoor experiences is one of our core goals. Sharing these powerful films with the Middlebury community provides amazing representation and hopefully inspires everyone to get outside—or do whatever else they're dreaming of—no matter their background."

THEA VOLPP

Dozing Off

Egan Turner



ACROSS
1 Cartoon noise
5 Backwards soda brand?
10 Figs. on a scoreboard
13 3rd most populous city in Nevada
14 Harvey or Martin
15 "Gross!"
16 Queen album featuring "Bohemian Rhapsody"
19 Royal leader, in Lisbon
20 Planet that collided with the Earth to create the Moon
21 Lemurs and orangutans
23 Drama series about high school football
26 Disfigure
29 Iso or poly suffix
30 Direction to Lake Dunmore from Middlebury
31 Singular evening occurrence
34 Connect
38 Study of body structures
39 3rd most populous UK city
41 Cause of an image issue
42 Children's book by Margaret Wise Brown
43 .- . .-
45 Home to hammer, anvil, and stirrup
46 Subjs. of scrolls on social media
47 49-year-old NBC program
53 Idi Amin and Chiang Kai-shek, for example
54 Nabisco cookies
58 Mine discovery
59 A popular Christmas carol, and a hint to 16-Across, 23-Across, 31-Across, 42-Across, and 47-Across
62 "Parks and Recreation" character Swanson
63 Dismissed
64 House in Juarez
65 Role-playing activity, for short
66 Baking measurements, for short
67 Soon, to Shakespeare

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1 Unruly child
2 Jacob's first wife in the Bible
3 It can be upped
4 Decorative pattern
5 Expert and franch suffix
6 Code for Sweden's biggest airport
7 "The A-Team" actor George
8 Each and ___
9 Dangerous situations
10 Western Australian capital
11 Post on X
12 Roger Federer or Carl Jung, for example
17 "Hardy" follower
18 Ship known for 1839 slave revolt
22 Discrimination based on trips around the sun
24 Mosque prayer leader
25 Turn down
26 Utah town close to two national parks
27 Con artist Delvey
28 Pore over
32 A twin city
33 Bullfighters
35 In February, Viola Davis became the 18th winner of this title
36 Instrument
37 Has rights to
39 Aim
40 College admissions criminal Loughlin
42 Yellowstone features
44 Without direction
47 Medieval weapon
48 NY Judge?
49 Fad
50 Improvise
51 2015 Super Bowl MVP Miller
52 Lucas' younger sister in "Stranger Things"
55 Yours truly?
56 Very
57 Lee of Marvel
60 Kathmandu country, in the Olympics
61 They are worth 6 10-Across

Polaroid Stories: a lens into the fringes of society

By JONATHAN EATON
Staff Writer

"Polaroid Stories," a play by Naomi Iizuka and directed by Professor of Theatre Alex Draper was performed Nov. 30 through Dec. 2 in the Seeler Studio Theatre in Mahaney Arts Center. The play focuses on at-risk youth coming of age in New York City, filtered through the lens of Greek mythology and Ovid's "Metamorphoses." It was inspired by Iizuka's work with at-risk teenagers who have fallen through the cracks of society and Jim Goldberg's photo book "Raised by Wolves."

I have always wanted to do the play because of the poetic, almost percussive beauty of its language, its focus on stories of those often overlooked or ignored, and the amazing challenges and opportunities for growth the roles offer an ensemble of actors," Draper wrote in an email to The Campus.

The show opens as Philomel (Elsa Marrian '25) descends down a dark staircase, singing "Hestia" by Katell Keineg. Then, the scene pans to the ten youths milling around an urban sprawl set filled with fences, garbage and graffiti. Through a series of darkly visceral vignettes, the show chronicles four main relationships in parallel: Orpheus and Eurydice; D, Skinhead Boy and Skinhead Girl; Echo and Narcissus; and Persephone and G.

Iizuka challenges the audience's traditional notions about Greek heroes and channels Ovid to bring the forgotten youth on the fringes of society to center stage. In contrast to the musical retelling "Hadestown," Ovid's Orpheus (Jonathan Mount '25.5) is an abusive, selfish man whose desires cannot be satisfied as he pursues Eurydice (Jordan Henry '26), a fearless girl searching for a place to call home. What started as fresh love gets twisted into fear and obsession, culminating in Orpheus's death at the hands of Eurydice towards the final moments of the play.

In one scene, D (movement director Miguel Alejandro Castillo '19), an arrogant, entrepreneurial man who runs a club and grounds the show with a mature lens, flirts with Skinhead Boy (Jack Barnhart '25.5), an insecure energetic youth who goads him about his masculinity. The scene explores tensions surrounding societal expectations for men and their sexuality. Later, Skinhead Boy robs D's stash of drugs with his girlfriend, Skinhead Girl (Patrice Cahill '25), and D finds out. Skinhead Boy tries to live above the law and escape society's expectations of him, but after his girlfriend overdoses, Skinhead returns to work for D, who strangles a confession out of him. The acute scenes of violence and drugs force the audience to bear witness to the gruesome realities of society.

COURTESY PHOTO/ CLINTON BRANDHAGEN

During the final scene of "Polaroid Stories", actors held up Polaroid photos to represent those who have fallen through the cracks of society in one way or another.

Throughout the play, various characters smoke joints, pop pills and inject heroin. During the rehearsal process, each actor researched the drugs that their character uses and spoke with local emergency room doctor Mike Kiernan about each drug's effects. By spotlighting the impacts of drugs and alcohol, Iizuka forces the audience to grapple with the crisis of addiction. Audience members reflected their appreciation for the show touching on intense topics.

"I thought the show was very good," said Cole Newman '26, who watched the play last weekend. "It was very hard in some places, but also felt like it touched on some very important topics that are not often talked about and it was very great to see."

Throughout the show, contrasting light and dark lighting called chiaroscuro along with audiovisual effects sculpted the stage into a 1990s urban landscape. In one mesmerizing scene, Skinhead Girl dashes through the slivers of light crisscrossing the dark stage. In another scene, the characters attend a rave with '90s music carefully chosen by Castillo and Professor Amit Prakash, including Sandstorm by Darude.

"I went to a rave and that song came on, and I watched how people acted," said Castillo.

The vivid audiovisual effects also enhanced the visceral emotional experience of the audience.

"I think it really challenges the audience to experience the show as it happens without reading into it, or trying to craft some overarching narrative," said Grayson Wade '26.

The show culminates in a powerful final scene in which each actor held up a Polaroid photo and shared the names of individuals from "Raised by the Wolves" and imaginary characters crafted by Iizuki, which was repeated from the opening scene. The names and photos created a shrine to those left behind and represented how lives may splinter apart, but humans still uphold the people they love in their own ways.

"Each one tiny and shimmering, each one a perfect living thing," D said.

Through its dark vignettes, "Polaroid Stories," chronicles addiction, rape, theft and love in relationships amongst at-risk youth, calling into question the virtues of our society, which casts out so many.

"I thought that this show has been the best show I have seen at Middlebury ever and I have been to a lot of them," said Makeda Hevrin '24.5. "Beautifully done, beautifully acted and beautifully set, and I thought the subject matter was really pertinent."

Songs for the season: 7 holiday albums to wrap up the semester

By ACADIA KELEPEIS
Arts & Culture Editor

It is no coincidence that Spotify Wrapped's name is a nod to festive paper and that it tactfully cuts off its tracking in November to avoid Instagram stories dominated by a deluge of Christmas music. But why shouldn't yuletide classics count as 'real' music? After all, the annual repetition of certain songs creates a powerful emotional nostalgia with which most new albums cannot compete. However, if you're looking to mix up your holiday soundtrack this year, here are seven recommendations for Dec. 7.

For tried and true classics: "Christmas (Deluxe 10th Anniversary Edition)" (2021) by Michael Bublé

What is not to love about this perfect album? Coming from a listener who has had Michael Bublé in their Spotify Wrapped several years running, it is always shocking when people don't realize that Bublé has more music than his Christmas classics. Nonetheless, if Mariah Carey is the queen of Christmas, Bublé is the undisputed king. A modern-day Sinatra influenced by crooners of yore, Bublé's 10-year-anniversary version of the album is jam-packed with 25 holiday classics ranging from the best version of well-known tunes like "It's Beginning to Look a Lot like Christmas" to fun originals like the cheerily romantic "Cold December Night."

For melancholy merrymaking: "Wintersong" (2006) by Sarah McLachlan

For those stuck somewhere between Scrooge and Santa, this is the album for you. If you can't quite place McLachlan's breathy mezzo-soprano, you might recognize her heart-wrenching song "When She Loved Me," featured in Disney's "Toy Story 2." This December, "Wintersong" toes the line between festive and depressing with haunting, slow renditions of holiday classics and originals like the titular track. Her clear voice makes one think of ice, but it is hard to decide whether it is part of a cheery skating rink or a frozen tear. For the heartbroken, "Song for a Winter's Night," "In a Bleak Mid Winter" and her cover of Joni Mitchell's "River" can take you through Christmas, New Year's and into January.

For lively reimagined classics in harmony: "Christmas With The Puppini Sisters" (2010) by The Puppini Sisters

Hosting a holiday dinner with friends or seeking the perfect soundtrack for tree trimming? Look no further than this spunky Christmas album from British vocal trio The Puppini Sisters. The group takes inspiration from the close harmonies of the early 20th-century singers the Andrews Sisters. Their accelerated version of Elton John's 1974 "Step into Christmas" kicks things off with a bang, while tracks like "Let It Snow" showcase the members' strengths as both solo singers and as an ensemble. Their "All I Want for Christmas" nods to the kind of creative, offbeat reimaginings that characterize the group's five other studio albums, successfully transitioning from a sweet and emphatic opening to brassy big band and rich harmonies.

For lovers of musical: "Olaf's Frozen Adventure (Original Soundtrack)" (2017) by the cast of "Frozen"

If you too were rocked by the recent tenth anniversary of the smash success "Frozen," consider tuning into the songs of the festive animated short that originally preceded the

2017 film "Coco." Broadway fans will be delighted to hear Idina Menzel ("Wicked"), Jonathan Groff ("Hamilton") and Josh Gad ("Book of Mormon"), while fans of "The Good Place" will appreciate Kristen Bell's honeyed soprano. Menzel's and Bell's opening duet, "Ring in the Season," captures the eager rush of preparing for a holiday gathering. The short's closing song, "When We're Together," offers thoughtful, heartfelt musings on the importance of being with loved ones during the holiday season, featuring sharp harmonies that capture the sisters' complementary natures. (Bonus: "Hamilton" co-star Leslie Odom Jr.'s second Christmas album features his signature silky vocals on classics and the standout original, "Snow.")

For the a cappella fan: "That's Christmas to Me (Deluxe Edition)" (2015) by Pentatonix

Undoubtedly the a capella group with the most Christmas spirit, Pentatonix has released six distinct holiday albums filled with high-energy, poppy versions of Christmas classics and originals. Although any of the six are worthy of mention, this album presents particularly creative tracks, including an unexpected mashup and a complex original. The precision of the multipart vocals makes this buoyant album the ideal accompaniment to a crafty holiday activity like cutting paper snowflakes or decorating a gingerbread house. Favorite songs include "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," and "That's Christmas to Me." (Bonus: Didn't get enough of Kristen Bell? Check out her feature in a cappella group Straight No Chaser's "Text Me Merry Christmas.")

For work-friendly instrumentals: "The Holiday (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)" (2006) by Hans Zimmer

Nestled among Zimmer's oeuvre of hard-hitting scores for characters as iconic as Jack Sparrow, James Bond and Batman is his music for a beloved rom-com. For some, a young book-editing Jude Law is a holiday figure on par with St. Nicholas himself. Whether or not this feel-good story about a house-swap-induced romance is on your radar screen, Zimmer's delicate melodies seem to suggest that no problem is really as bad as it seems — or can't be cured by a holiday romance. Favorite tracks include "Gumption" (may we all have more of it) and "Cry," which swells to a thrilling, joyful climax with just the right combination of guitar and violins. This is the end-of-semester deadline soundtrack you need.

For the ones who think they've heard it all: "A Very Chaise Lounge Christmas" (2012) by Chaise Lounge

Convinced you've heard every holiday song out there? Think again. Little-known '60s-inspired band Chaise Lounge has a short but sweet Christmas album stuffed with original tunes that manage to sound like classics. Band member Charlie Barnett penned the anticipatory "December 25" and the snuggly ballad "The Heart of December." The album's standout original, however, is the gleeful, cheeky "Snow Day." The song evokes the scene from the 1974 classic film "The Year Without a Santa Claus" in which the mayor joyfully sings "It's Gonna Snow Right Here in Dixie." Sandwiched between covers of songs like "Christmasville, Usa" and "The Man with the Bag," this jazzy album is the rare pearl you need on your playlist of Christmas classics.

REEL CRITIC: "THE HUNGER GAMES: THE BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS & SNAKES" FILM SHOWCASES ALL TYPES OF TERRAIN

By CHARLIE KEOHANE and MAGGIE REYNOLDS
Editor at Large and Editor in Chief

"The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" is the latest installment in one of the twenty-first century's most beloved franchises. Based on the bestselling book by Suzanne Collins, "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" takes viewers back in time to the barbaric tenth annual Hunger Games, where a young Coriolanus "Coryo" Snow (Tom Blythe) is rising to power in the dystopian country of Panem.

Sixty-four years before we meet Katniss Everdeen, Lucy Gray Baird (Rachel Zegler) is reaped for the Hunger Games from the poor, coal-mining District 12. The games are in their early development stage, with students in Panem's wealthy capital serving as mentors for the first time. Snow and Lucy are paired together under the watchful eye of head game maker Dr. Volumnia Gaul (Viola Davis) and Dean of the Academy Casca Highbottom (Peter Dinklage). Tensions rise as Snow's "frenemy" Sejanus Plinth (Josh Andrés Rivera), who lived in Panem's poorer districts until his wealthy father bought their way into The Capitol, tries to sabotage the games. Jason Schwartzman also stars as Lucretius "Lucky" Flickerman, the comedic weatherman-turned-host of the Games, and Hunter Schafer serves as Snow's wise older cousin.

Zegler is stellar, and the casting is strong across the board. This feels like a big break for Blythe, who is both charming and disarming, successfully portraying the character development of well-known movie villain President Snow. Schwartzman's zingers provide unexpectedly fun moments of comic relief to the film, while Davis is chillingly evil.

Clocking in at a solid 2 hours and 38 minutes, "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds of Snakes" is far from a tight 90-minute movie. Despite its length, however, the movie's plot clips along quickly. The film is separated into three chapters, providing the lead-up, intense climax, and devastating fallout of the Hunger Games. No scene is wasted, and every interaction serves a purpose in the plot development of the movie. Even if the story does feel a little overstuffed at moments, the limited standstill time from scene to scene keeps viewers on the edge of their seats.

Fans of the book will notice some key differences since the plot is tightened and sped up. The details about some of the other mentors and tributes as well as Snow's inner thoughts have been lost in the adaptation from page to screen. Snow's rise to evil is less visible and calculated in the film than the book, which might throw off unsuspecting viewers off. While Snow's character development was nuanced and realistic for the first 2 hours and 15 minutes, the full extent of his evil motives is revealed in the rushed final 20 minutes of the movie.

As the title suggests, there are several ballads in "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes." Zegler, of "West Side Story" fame, shows off her impressive vocals throughout with stunners like "The Hanging Tree" and "Nothing You Can Take From Me." Her style is a delightful mix of folk and country, complete with a fun, twangy accent. Mixed in with intense action scenes and tender moments, however, some of Zegler's songs felt a little out of place with everything else the film was trying to do.

Also, be sure to stay until the end to hear Olivia Rodrigo's stunning, haunting ballad, "Can't Catch Me Now" as the credits roll.

Fans of "The Hunger Games" franchise will undoubtedly enjoy getting a morbid look inside the brutal early world of the games and Panem. It's interesting to see how some traditions in later Hunger Games ——- the interviewing and parading of candidates, the fantastical arena, gifts, and mentors — are developed. For first-time viewers of the franchise, too, the film draws the audience into the character of President Snow and the development of the games, leaving them wanting to see more of the world of Panem.

Spoiler alert paragraph! We can't discuss "The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" without addressing the crazy ending. Lucy and Snow's relationship disintegrates fast, leaving us wanting to know more about the cracks in their early relationship and a deeper exploration of their dynamic in general. Snow shows how cold and cunning he is in the final scene, but it sneaks up on us rather abruptly. Tigress is also an underutilized character; she hauntingly points out Snow's similarities with his father, who was also a power-hungry and brutal figure. We think Lucy Gray lives on in the woods, but her fate after Snow fires his gun into the forest is strikingly ambiguous.

"The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" is an ambitious film that largely works. The mix of action, music and romance in a familiar yet frightening dystopian setting makes it a nail-biter from start to finish.

MEN'S VARSITY SOCCER BOWS OUT IN ELITE 8

By BLAISE SIEFER
Staff Writer

Despite falling short of its goal, men's soccer can still reflect on a successful season.

Middlebury made it to the NCAA Quarterfinals for the fifth time in program history before falling to Amherst College 1–0 on Nov. 19. The Panthers, who felt like they had the pieces to make a run at the national title, were sent home earlier than anticipated.

"It was a historic season. We absolutely had the pieces to win a national title, and of course we feel like we felt short," said Kyle Nilsson '25. "But the season has had so many positives despite this, and it's so important to recognize our achievements and our culture because this team is truly special."

Prior to their quarterfinal loss, the Panthers showed just what made them so unique. After conceding two goals to SUNY Cortland in the early stages of the NCAA Round of 16 game, Middlebury scored four unanswered goals to win 4–2. Nilsson started the comeback at the end of the first half.

"Our mindset this season was always forward," Nilsson said. "[The game against] Cortland was the culmination of an entire season of our always forward mindset, always demanding the best of everyone around you."

Before beating Cortland, Middlebury earned a pair of first and second-round NCAA tournament wins against Western New England University and Johns Hopkins, respectively.

Despite falling short of a national championship, the Panthers have plenty of reason to celebrate. The team set a school record for most goals in a season (52) and recorded 15 wins, tied for third-most in program history. Middlebury also finished with an unbeaten regular season record for the first time since 1998.

The squad will graduate five seniors this year, including Jordan Saint Louis '24, who finished his career with 24 goals and 21 assists, and Ryan Grady '23.5, who leaves as the school record holder in clean sheets (40) and saves (278). Captain Ben Powers '23.5, Jacob Charles '23.5 and Ben Taylor '24 will also graduate this academic year.

"The seniors have been a massive part of what's changed the culture and technical ability for this team," said Nilsson. "Their graduation will leave a massive hole."

Although the presence of this year's seniors will certainly be missed, there is plenty of reason for optimism looking ahead. Next year, the team returns with five of its top six point scorers: Gavin Randolph '26, Nilsson, Tyler Payne '25, Colin Dugan '27 and Luke Madden '24.5, respectively. The team's backline mainstays — absent Grady — also return: Madden, Will O'Brien '24.5, Hank Nelson '25 and Owen Davis '27.

The team's first-year class also holds promise. Dugan was one of the top point scorers this season with three goals and four assists, Davis had the seventh most minutes on the team (1437) and Will Sawin started in 20 of the 21 games in which he played.

Several questions face the Panthers entering the 2024 season. Who will step up as the team's top point scorer, given the departure of Saint-Louis? Which goalkeeper will replace Ryan Grady? And how will Middlebury learn from their defeats to Tufts and Amherst?

Fortunately, head coach Alex Elias '08 has no shortage of time or options. He also now has the support of new assistant coach Ben Potter '20, who players say has had an immediate impact on the program.

"The coaches are a pretty sensational unit. They put the team first in every way and have gone above and beyond to be resources to us off the field," Nilsson said. "They have shown us what it truly feels to be part of a family and community, and we are so grateful."

COURTESY PHOTO/BRIAN FOLEY

Ben Powers ' 23.5 was a senior captain for the Panthers this fall.

COURTESY PHOTO

Middlebury competed against Western New England University at the NCAA Tournament, in additional to Johns Hopkins University, SUNY Cortland and Amherst College.

WOMENS' BASKETBALL GAINS MOMENTUM MOVING INTO KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

By LEXI LINAFELTER
Sports Editor

Despite a turbulent start to the season, Middlebury womens' basketball has been trending upward in recent weeks. After walking away from the Middlebury Tip-Off Classic tournament 0–2 and dropping close games to both Framingham State University (53-56) and Springfield College (46–56), the team has since won three of four recent games, claiming big wins against Vermont State University Castleton (75–57) and Union College (68–50).

This past weekend, the Panthers were narrowly defeated by Babson College (45–56) before gracefully taking down Wheaton College (79–56) at the Williams Shooting Touch Classic. With a tough schedule of conference play on the horizon, the Panthers will need to be at their absolute best if they want to secure their first conference title.

At a glance, the keys to their success moving forward are simple: The team boasts a robust defense, limiting their opponents to under 60 points in all its games so far. Offensively, the team has no shortage of firepower this year with Alexa Mustafaj '25 at the helm. Mustafaj leads the conference in scoring by a comfortable 12 points so far this season (188), averaging 23.5 points per game. Out of possession, Augusta Dixon '24.5 has also established herself as a force to be reckoned with, currently resting in the top 10 in the conference for both defensive rebounds (sixth) and blocked shots (ninth).

A deep postseason run will depend on the Panthers staying focused, vocal and hungry until the final buzzer, something that should not be an issue for a team that boasts a wealth of experience on the court. The Panthers return 11 players from last year and are led by captains Dixon, Emily Downer '24 and Bethany Lucey '24.

"We've already figured out how to work together and grow," Downer said. "Now all we have to do is continue to grind together to get up to our best."

The Panthers' early season matchups are meaningful, but they mostly represent opportunities for the team to gel and find its rhythm. Once the Panthers kick off conference play on Jan. 5 against Hamilton (8–0), their season will be fully underway, as each matchup could potentially bring them one step closer to a high seed for the NESCAC and NCAA tournaments. If the team is able to find their flow and build enough positive momentum to take down key NESCAC challengers like Williams College, Trinity College and Tufts University, Middlebury could be on track to surpass their fourth-place conference finish last season.

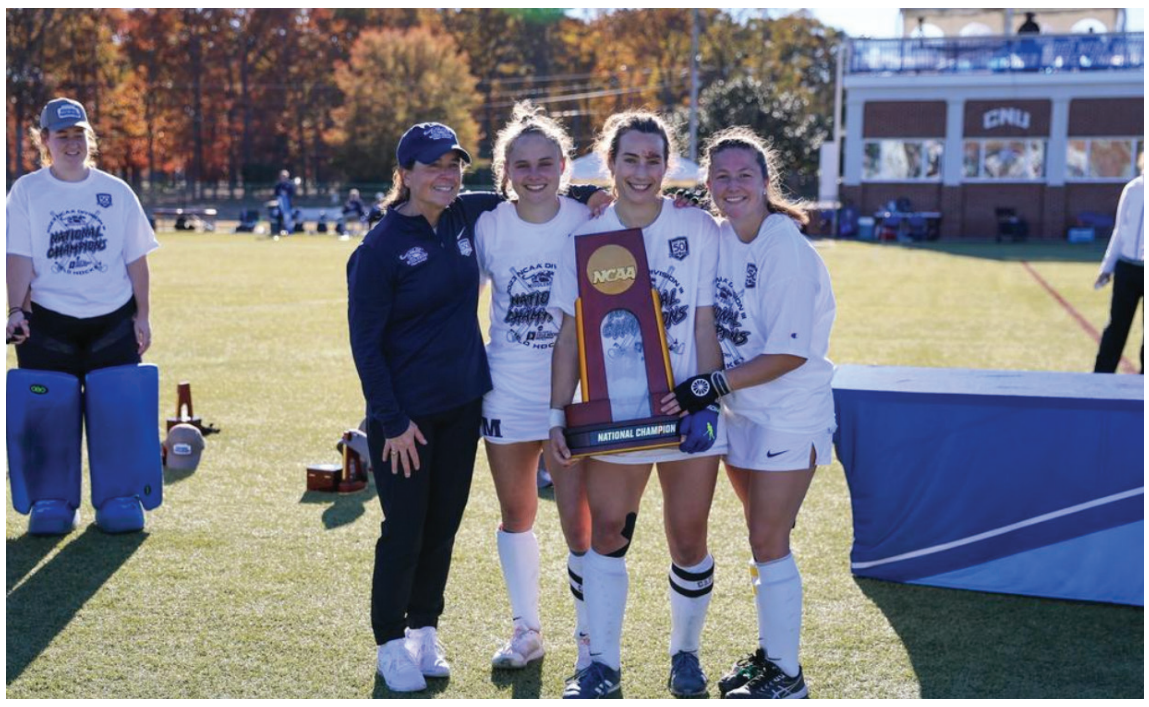
For now, the Panthers have their eyes on a win against Stevens College in their next matchup on Friday, Dec. 29 at 3 p.m. in Hoboken, N.J.

COURTESY PHOTO/WILL COSTELLO

The women's basketball team has started the season 4-4.

CAPTAIN'S CORNER, CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION: A Chat with Field Hockey Captains Charlotte Marks '23.5, Audrey Lazar '23.5 and Katie George '23.5

By CAPTAIN RUDOLPH
Staff Writer



COURTESY PHOTO/STEVE GOLDBURG

Audrey Lazar '23.5 (left), Katie George '23.5 (center), and Charlotte Marks '23.5 (right) won four national titles during their time with Middlebury Field Hockey.

The Middlebury field hockey team capped off another successful season with an NCAA Championship win for the sixth straight year. An impressive feat to say the least, their dominance in the sport has been spurred by a relentless pursuit to play at the top of their game. The Panthers maintained an undefeated record and finished 22–0 on the season, beating Johns Hopkins University 2–0 in the final. This was the third straight year the two teams have met in the final, with the Panthers emerging victorious every time.

The Panthers certainly emphasize the collective effort of their team, but the role of the group's leaders in their continued success cannot be understated. Audrey Lazar '23.5 scored in the first quarter of the final on a pass from Katie George '23.5, giving the Panthers a lead they never gave up. In the third quarter, Lazar again put the ball in the net using an acrobatic shot that secured the Panthers' lead. For a defense boasting a record 14 shutouts this season, a two goal cushion proved to be all that Charlotte Marks '23.5 and the rest of the defense needed to seal the win, marking eight straight games of NCAA tournament play for the team without conceding a goal.

On the heels of the program's eighth NCAA title, I sat down this week with these three captains to ask them about the season, the team and their future.

Captain Rudolph: Put into perspective how this season's championship victory differed from the past three. What made this team special? What was different about your playing style?

Katie George: This championship is different from the other ones because for me, it marks the end. While sometimes a scary thought, it makes my career feel complete. This team was so different from any of the other ones because I was a senior and had more responsibility than before. I wanted to pass on everything I have learned in my time on this team to those younger than me. This year it was a goal of mine to not get as many penalty cards. I am happy to say that after leading the team in cards since my freshman year, I only got one in the final four game against Babson.

CR: Charlotte, you've been a rock for this team for the past three years having started at center back in all 66 games of the past three seasons. You've played 94% of the possible minutes over that time, averaging only three minutes and 30 seconds off the field each game. What has it meant to you to be able to run the team from the back for all these games?

Charlotte Marks: With time on the field in a position like center back comes knowledge and understanding of the flow of the game and how my teammates play in front of me. I have become so familiar with the tendencies of each of my teammates that I am able to communicate more effectively and facilitate organization with defensive decision-making. While I myself am not taking many shots on the goal, I do my best to use this knowledge to set my teammates up for success and position them well for goal-scoring opportunities.

CR: Audrey, what a feat to score the two decisive goals in the championship game. Elaborate on how the team looks at scoring and its approach to getting the win. How did it feel to score in the game that led to your fourth national championship with the field hockey team?

Audrey Lazar: Goals and goal scoring plays are proportionally such a small part of the game. They serve as culminating moments that reflect the amount of energy and collective spirit that goes into the overall effort. Of course, it felt great for the team to score twice in the national championship. These were the moments that took our collective efforts and turned them into tangible results towards winning the championship.

CR: Katie, with this season's 23 goals, you've moved into third on the all-time leaderboard in goals having scored 70 in your four seasons on the team. What has it meant to be so crucial in contributing to the team's wins as a scorer and as the first line of defense when the opposing teams play out of the back? What have been the most memorable goals of your career?

KG: We've all had so much success scoring, particularly this year because our defense is so strong. They keep the ball out of our defensive zone and give us the confidence to take chances and play risky. In terms of pressing, I always have so much fun with Caroline Segal '24.5 and Audrey. We make it a game. My favorite goals have been the ones when Audrey and I are rushing up together and one gets an assist and the other gets the goal. In particular, I have to say the first goal against [Johns] Hopkins when she scored so early on was a highlight for me. Nothing beats goals that come early and often.

CR: Charlotte, here's the chance to hype up your wonderful goalies that have been your partners in crime for the past four years when it comes to keeping the opposing team from scoring. What can you say about the role of the goalies on this team and how have you personally bonded with them as the center back?

CM: Our goalies deserve all the love for their incredibly hard work throughout the season. Especially on a team like the ones we have had over the past few years – it is arguably more difficult to be a goalie on a team that is only letting up a few shots on goal each game. More than ever, the goalie is challenged to stay highly alert even through longer periods of inaction to be ready and agile when a shot does come. I have so much respect for our goalkeepers, and it has been an honor to work so closely with KK Newton '24 and Grace Harlan '22.5 over the years. Being on the same page as your goalkeeper and understanding the types of saves that they are willing and able to make in each scenario is of utmost importance to finding success in the defensive zone.

CR: Audrey, we mentioned that you have now won four titles with the field hockey team, but this season's win actually solidifies a fifth NCAA national championship win for you as a member of the women's hockey team that won the national title in 2021. Talk about the feeling of being part of three exemplary programs at the school as you also sprint for the Women's Track and Field team. How have you used what you've learned on the field hockey team to better your game when you hit the ice each winter and get running in the spring?

AL: My experience with Middlebury Athletics has been beyond incredible. The success of each team is not defined by championships and trophies. Every year, each group comes prepared and excited to tackle the challenges ahead. Across all three teams, there is a universal desire to compete and play with joy. Each team has taught me so much about myself, as well as how to be a better teammate and person for others. During each season, I continue to learn, so I am looking forward to a few more months with a great group!

CR: Katie, of all the players I've ever interviewed, no one has been as quick to praise their coach as you. Tell me about this special relationship you've built with Coach Katharine DeLorenzo. What impact has she had on your life off the field?

KG: Being on this team expedites the process of growing up and maturing. In just four years here my teammates and I have faced varying levels of adversity and difficulty that most people don't encounter until post-grad or even late into their 20s. [Coach DeLorenzo] has expertly guided me and many of my teammates in navigating this growing-up process at two times the speed. She's offered such crucial guidance, comfort, and anything I needed to help me through those tough times. She has the ability to help us realize our own strength and guide us in the right direction.

CR: Charlotte, considering you've spent the last three seasons at the helm and will be graduating this February, tell us a little bit about who will be stepping in at center back next season?

CM: There are lots of rising young stars on our team, so it's hard to say what decisions [Coach DeLorenzo] will make next season. However, what I can say is that [Coach DeLorenzo] has an eye for things like this and I trust that she will make her decisions with lots of care and consideration for all of the attributes that a center back needs. I think ultimately the decision will come down to who is playing the surrounding positions and finding "powerful pairs" who bolster and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Editor's note: this interview has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

ROOKIE OF THE WEEK: FAYANNE SMITH-SALZBURG '27

By CHARLES CROUNSE
Senior Sports Editor

Welcome back to another edition of Rookie of the Week, where we introduce first-year athletes making a major impact in their chosen sport. This week, I sat down with Fayanne Smith-Salzburg '27 of women's swim and dive, who won the opening two races of her collegiate career. Hailing from Brooklyn, N.Y., Smith-Salzburg discussed her transition away from city life, her favorite event and her strong start to life as a Panther.

Charles Crounse: My first question is one you've probably heard many times before — what made you choose Middlebury Swim and Dive?

Fayanne Smith-Salzburg: I was looking at a lot of small liberal arts schools. I'm from Brooklyn and I went to a small high school, so I felt like I wanted to go to a smaller college. I also wanted to explore outside the city even though I do really like it there. I was looking at a lot of NESCACs actually and what sold me on Middlebury was the recruiting trip. It was very organized and everyone was super friendly, and they had lots of planned activities. Middlebury has a well-known name in academics too and I didn't want to swim Division I since I wanted to prioritize my academics as well as swimming. The team solidified my choice since they were really great, and the coaches were amazing at talking to and welcoming me.

CC: How have you found the transition from Brooklyn to rural Vermont so far?

FSS: It's definitely a little weird walking outside and not seeing a busy city. I was a little homesick in the beginning, but it's really beautiful here and I feel like I've found good friends, so the transition has been better than I expected. I'm excited for when the season ends and I can explore more of Vermont.

CC: At what point did you decide that you wanted to swim in college?

FSS: At my club team in Manhattan, a lot of the people go on to swim in college. During my freshman year in high school, I was one of the younger ones in my group and I was with a lot of older kids. It was a super fun environment and I realized I would love to have a team like that in college. I like the sport, I'm pretty competitive and I like racing, and I like that having the team keeps me on a good schedule.

CC: Going back even further, how did you get your start in the sport?

FSS: My parents have a story that I always loved the water. My older sister swam for a club team, so they just threw me in there with her. I think it was around third grade that I started competitively swimming. My sister didn't end up sticking with it but I loved it and just kept progressing from there.

CC: This past week, you raced the 200 yard individual medley, the 100 yard breaststroke and the 200 yard breaststroke. Do you have a favorite of those events?

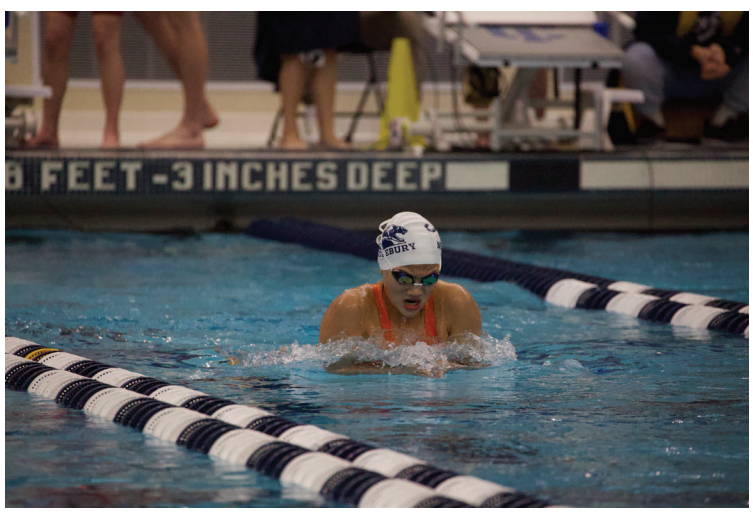
FSS: I don't know. Maybe the 100 breaststroke. It changes a lot. The 200 breaststroke is a good event when you're feeling good, but it's tough when you're not feeling great. The 100 is so much shorter that it's easier to hype yourself up for it because it won't hurt as much.

CC: You've raced two meets. This past weekend you were second, second, and third, and in your opening race you won both races. What was that like?

FSS: It felt good for sure. I didn't really know what to expect. I was feeling a little under the weather the week before, so I wasn't even sure I would make the away team because not everyone goes to away meets. It felt good because it felt like I was contributing to the team and it was just good to be racing again.

CC: Looking ahead now, what are you most excited for the rest of the season?

FSS: I'm excited for our dual meets since they're good racing opportunities to get off the block and see how fast you can go. I enjoyed [the Bomber Invitational] a lot because it was fun to bond with the team and the bus rides were super fun. A specific meet I'm looking forward to is NESCACs just because there are a lot of teams there and it's the championship. It's hosted here at Middlebury [this year] which is exciting for us.



COURTESY PHOTO/ LUKE MCNAMARA

Fayanne Smith-Salzburg ' 27 won her first two collegiate races.

CC: Have you had a favorite Middlebury moment?

FSS: I don't know, it's hard to pick. I have a funny Middlebury moment. When I was registering for classes, it was during one of our morning practices. Freshmen don't have the best pick, and Banner9 logged me out a few times, and it wasn't going very well. I was sitting there and trying to get any classes I could and everyone from the team would come in and give me classes. I was very thankful to be doing it during morning practice. Everyone around was helping out and wanted to make sure I got my classes, which was really sweet. I was there for 45 minutes probably and they were all just giving me [Course Registration Numbers] and helping out, and I ended up getting good classes so it all worked out.

CC: Lastly, is there anything else you want to add or any plugs for meets you want people to see?

FSS: Definitely come to women's NESCACs, they're at Middlebury and will be a lot of fun.

Editor's Note: This interview has been lightly edited for brevity and clarity.